



***Strengthening Family–School Partnerships:
Parent Engagement in School Drug Education Initiatives
A Guide***

An Australian Government Initiative

Published by the Australian Government Department of Education, Science and Training
GPO Box 9880
Canberra ACT 2601
Australia

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Strengthening Family–School Partnerships ISBN 1 920911 23 5

REDI – for Parents resource ISBN 1 920911 26 X

Printed by JS McMillian Printing Group, phone 02 6230 6200

7347SCHP06A

Foreword

The Australian Government is committed to supporting national efforts to reduce harm caused by drugs in our society and to our young people. The *REDI – for Parents* resource, aims to build the capacity of school communities to engage with and support parents to nurture students' learning, health and wellbeing. *REDI – for Parents* is part of the REDI – Resilience Education and Drug Information suite of resources, a collection of multimedia drug education resources developed for Australian schools under the National School Drug Education Strategy.

REDI – for Parents recognises the importance of families to the academic success, health and wellbeing of their child/ren. It bases its approach on international resilience research that highlights the importance of promoting young people's sense of connectedness to school and family to buffer them against a range of harms, including those associated with drug use. Productive partnerships between schools, family and the community can provide young people with real benefits across the school years and beyond.

REDI – for Parents is the latest addition to the ground breaking REDI resources. The REDI resources are the first Australian school drug education resources that focus on preventing and reducing harm from drug use by building more resilient young people. Australian and international research shows that young people who have strong relationships – with their friends, family, school and within their community – are more resilient. Resilience is the ability to cope with and bounce back from life's challenging and difficult experiences. It can help our youth deal with life stresses and instill in them the confidence to deal with issues and problems that may arise in their everyday life, including those relating to drugs.

The *Strengthening Family–School Partnerships* guide is designed to assist the school leadership team in strengthening and sustaining partnerships between families, the school and the broader community. It adopts a flexible approach to complement work already being undertaken in schools in the areas of partnerships and drug education, providing models, suggestions and examples, rather than a prescriptive formula.

I commend this important resource to you and trust that it will build the capacity of school communities to engage with and support parents through strategies that nurture students' learning, health and wellbeing.



JULIE BISHOP MP
Minister for Education, Science and Training
June, 2006

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The approach and tools in *Strengthening Family–School Partnerships* have been informed by the *MindMatters* resources, in particular *CommunityMatters: Working with diversity for wellbeing* and *SchoolMatters: Mapping and managing mental health in schools*. Both these resources are available through Curriculum Corporation, Victoria, at <http://cms.curriculum.edu.au/mindmatters/index.htm>

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Part 1 Overview

Strengthening Family–School Partnerships is ...

Strengthening Family–School Partnerships, A guide is part of the REDI – for Parents resource, developed to assist schools and families foster the health and wellbeing of their young people, particularly in the area of drug prevention.

This guide provides schools and their communities with information and planning tools to assist them in reviewing and strengthening partnerships between the school, families and community as part of preventing and reducing drug-related harm.

Who is it for?

Strengthening Family–School Partnerships has been written for:

- **The school leadership team**
It provides background information, guidelines and tools aimed at empowering school leaders in the work they undertake with staff, families, students and the community to identify and determine how partnerships can be strengthened to meet the diverse needs of *all* their students, including those at risk.
- **All schools**
It is intended for use in primary, middle and secondary school settings.

Rationale

Parent engagement, community networks and positive family and school interactions are important from early childhood through to late adolescence to:

- help buffer students against a range of harms (including drug-related harm) and
- nurture students' capacity for learning, health and wellbeing.

While students, families and schools may change their expectations about parent participation and ways of interacting at different stages of schooling, strong bonds between family and school benefit student academic outcomes and healthy development across the school years.

Aims

Strengthening Family–School Partnerships is designed to support the school leadership team to:

- develop an understanding of the importance of both families and schools in nurturing resilience, learning and wellbeing in young people
- plan and work with the broader school community to consider the effectiveness of current family–school partnerships and determine strategies for enhancing these as part of their approach to drug prevention
- identify useful resources that will strengthen the skills and capacity of the school leadership, staff, parents and community to work in partnership to prevent and reduce drug-related harm among their young people.

How to use this guide

Strengthening Family–School Partnerships:

- is designed for the school leadership team
- builds on existing REDI resources
- is designed as a flexible toolkit which complements other resources.

Designed for the school leadership team

The guide has been designed for the school leadership team, including the school principal, school executive and parent representatives as well as other key staff, community and student representatives, according to the school context. As the school leadership team, you can use the information and tools in this guide to strengthen parent and community participation in the school's approach to drug prevention through:

- planning and working together
- involving a wider range of stakeholders.

Builds on existing REDI resources

While this guide can be used as a stand-alone resource, it has been designed to integrate with the other REDI resources (particularly those in REDI – for Parents) and to build on other resources in the REDI suite of materials.

Strengthening Family–School Partnerships assumes some familiarity with *REDI for School Communities*, which assists school communities to consider their whole school approach to nurturing learning and resilience in young people. It is recommended that in preparation for

Strengthening Family–School Partnerships assumes the involvement and support of the school principal. It also assumes that the school leadership team includes parent representatives. Both are vital to developing and sustaining partnerships between families and the school. This is discussed in more depth in Part 4.

using *Strengthening Family–School Partnerships*, the school leadership team is familiar with the *REDI for School Communities* video and facilitator guide. There you will find relevant background material on a whole school approach to promote student health and wellbeing across the school's ethos, curriculum and partnerships (including those with families and community agencies/services). *Strengthening Family–School Partnerships* builds on this material and looks more deeply and specifically at the partnership aspect of a whole school approach to health and wellbeing, with a drug prevention focus. See Figure 1.1 below.

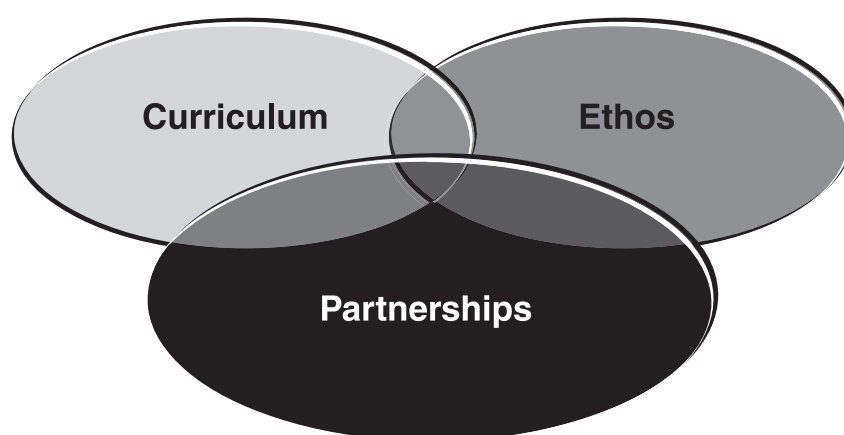


Figure 1.1: The whole school approach to health and wellbeing







To access information about the suite of REDI resources, go to www.redi.gov.au. You can download a copy of the *REDI for School Communities* video facilitator guide or request a copy of the *REDI Professional Development* resource to assist your school.

The *REDI for School Communities* video facilitator guide contains a survey that can be conducted across the school community to consider current policies and practices in relation to the school's ethos, curriculum and partnerships for drug prevention. This can provide a useful preliminary activity before utilising the tools in this guide.

Designed as a flexible toolkit which complements other resources

It is likely that your school leadership team will comprise people with a range of knowledge and experience in the area of school drug education and community involvement strategies. For this reason the material in this guide has been designed with a flexible approach, including references to more information depending on individual and group leadership needs.

It has been structured to help you move in and out of the material to support your particular needs and access the resources you require. To assist in this process, the following icons appear at certain points throughout this guide:

-  Indicates useful sites and links where further information can be found.
-  Indicates other relevant parts of REDI – for Parents resources that may complement your approach.
-  Indicates particular sections or tools in this guide that are relevant to the ideas being presented.
-  Indicates an issue for consideration.

Some of the tools provided, such as the sample audit tool, critical success factors and strategies for strengthening family–school partnerships and the strategic action plan, are available on the CD-ROM in this resource and can be adapted to your particular school context.

The approach

The *Strengthening Family–School Partnerships* approach is one of strengthening and sustaining partnerships across the spectrum from drug prevention through to intervention for *all* students, including those at risk. These partnerships need to be based on the specific needs, resources and capacities of the local school community and require leadership, commitment and goodwill.

There is a strong tradition in many schools of engaging parents, families and community members in the life of the school as part of promoting students' learning and wellbeing. This is not always easy and it can be challenging to achieve strong engagement with all families within a school community. The *Strengthening Family–School Partnerships* approach recognises that:

- engaging the diverse range of families across a community can have substantial benefits for the school, its students and their families, in terms of their resilience, capacity for learning and wellbeing, including in drug-related areas
- there is value in moving from school-centred models of parental participation, which put the onus on school staff, to one of developing and strengthening alliances across school, family and community
- moving to and strengthening a partnership approach within a school community takes time, commitment and leadership
- there is no 'one size fits all' version of partnership, and each school community needs to determine what will be productive and realistic within its particular context, needs and capacity.

The *Strengthening Family–School Partnerships* approach:

- promotes family–school partnerships to nurture resilience and wellbeing
- is based on current research
- is comprehensive, ‘whole of school’.

Promotes family–school partnerships to nurture resilience and wellbeing

Ideally, family–school partnerships are collaborative relationships and activities involving school staff, parents, and other family and school community members.

In the context of drug prevention, these family–school partnerships are directed towards nurturing the resilience, learning and wellbeing of all students, including those at risk.



Part 6, **Tool 1** describes the seven key dimensions of family–school partnerships for nurturing resilience and reducing drug-related harm.

Part 3 provides an outline of productive family–school partnerships.

Part 4 describes a process that can be followed to strengthen and sustain productive family–school partnerships.

Based on current research

The approach in *Strengthening Family–School Partnerships* is based on and affirms the importance of recognising current research findings and good practice for effective drug prevention in school communities. This includes (but is not limited to):

- using current research and evidence-based practice that is relevant to the local context
- moving beyond one-off drug education programmes and classroom-based strategies
- promoting a comprehensive approach across the whole school
- promoting positive relationships and networks in and across family, school and the community
- nurturing resilience and positive youth development for all students
- promoting a positive school climate that is inclusive of all students and families
- providing positive and meaningful learning opportunities for students that help connect them to home, school and community.

All recent reviews on effective drug education have highlighted 'the inadequacy of programs with a singular emphasis, stressing the need for comprehensive approaches ... System-wide change programs are those supported by family and/or community ... that do not aim on fixing the youth [but to] alter the ... school atmosphere and/or engage students in the learning process ... [T]he prevention field is moving to system-wide change programs. (Tobler, 2000, p 268)

Nurturing positive relationships and climate across the school community, which engage parents, family and the broader community, is fundamental to effective practice.

In 2004, the Australian Government published the revised *Principles for School Drug Education*. This sets out the 12 Principles for effective school drug education and the research evidence on which they are based. The 12 Principles make clear the importance of a positive and inclusive school climate that fosters collaborative relationships between students, family, staff and the broader community as part of a whole school approach to promoting health and wellbeing.



To access the Principles for school drug education (Meyer and Cahill, 2004) and their supporting materials, go to the Reading Room at www.redi.gov.au

Comprehensive, whole of school

Problematic drug use is not an isolated issue. It involves a complex interrelationship of factors including the individual, his/her relationships with peers, family, school and community, as well as broader structural factors. Preventing and responding to drug-related harm requires a comprehensive response that works across a number of factors that influence young people's lives.



Part 2 presents the risk and protective factors that can impact a young person's drug use.

The *Strengthening Family–School Partnerships* approach is comprehensive and works across the whole school community. It encourages system-wide initiatives to promote students' resilience, health and wellbeing, in particular around drug-related issues.

Figure 1.2 provides a framework that can help you to consider how families, schools and the broader community might work in partnership across the spectrum from drug prevention through to intervention for all students, including those at risk. It is based on the WHO model for health promotion and asks you to consider the role of family–school partnerships across four levels:

1. the whole school environment
2. the school curriculum
3. additional support
4. assessment and referral.

Single one shot strategies are particularly ineffective. Drug use and abuse is a complex psychosocial issue that cannot be fixed by simple solutions. (Spooner, Hall and Lynskey, 2001)

Who is involved?

The level of intervention

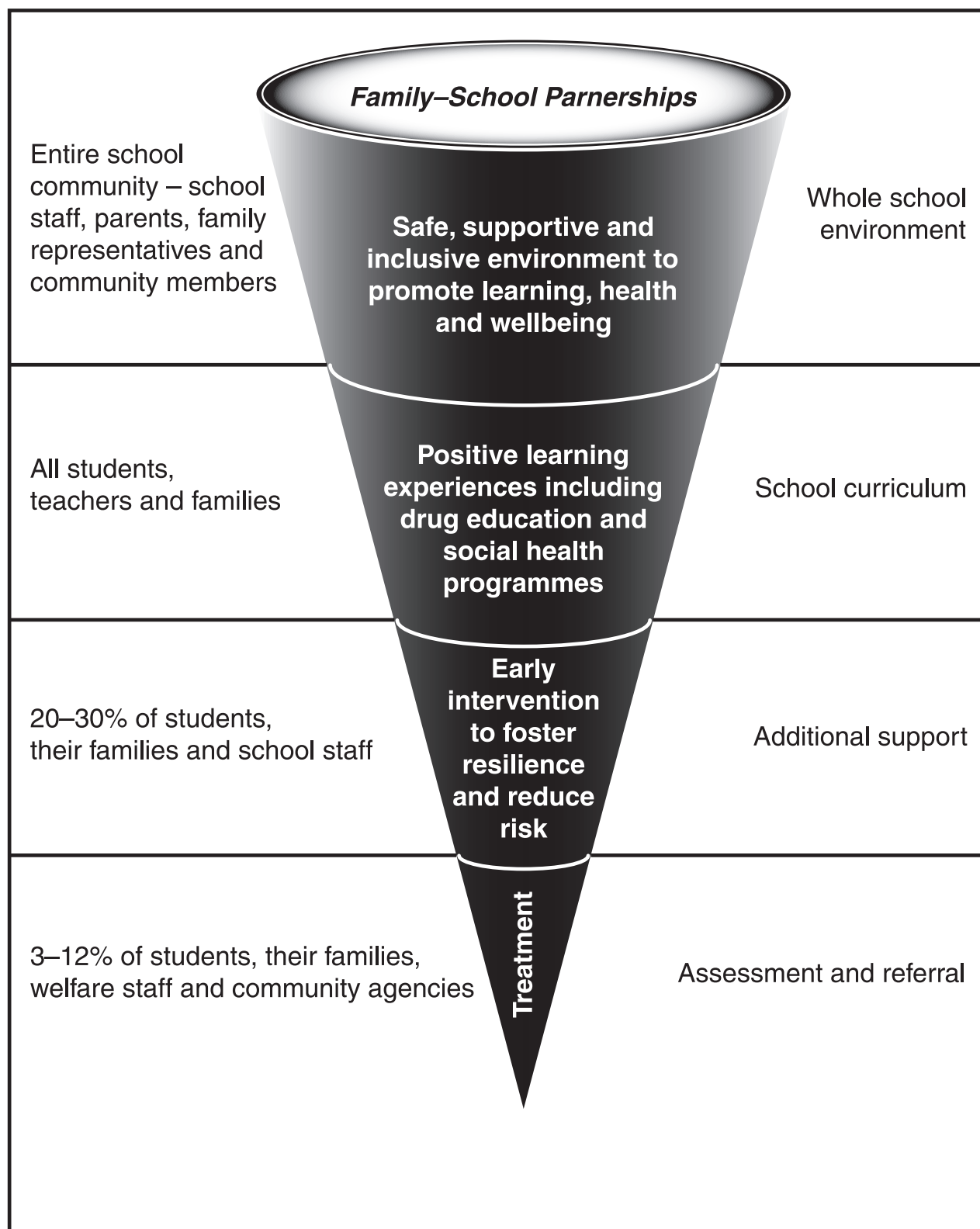


Figure 1.2: Family–school partnerships for fostering resilience and reducing drug-related harm



Is there a positive school climate where the diversity of students and families in the community is welcomed?

Whole school environment¹

At the widest part of the cone (Figure 1.2), partnerships across the school community focus on promoting resilience, learning and wellbeing as part of the school's approach to drug prevention. Activities across the school community are directed to strengthening positive relationships, policies and practices that will nurture a supportive and inclusive climate for all students, staff, families and the community.



Are there learning opportunities that promote parent and student participation as part of the curriculum?

School curriculum

At the second level of the cone, the health and wellbeing of all students is promoted through positive learning activities and educational programmes in and beyond the school. The school curriculum, including drug education, helps students to connect meaningfully to school, home and the community. Students' resilience and wellbeing is promoted through:

- what is learned (such as problem solving and communication skills)
- using inclusive and interactive strategies that engage students with their families, peers, teachers and community.

Ideally at this level there is strong communication between parents and teachers, and students' learning and wellbeing is supported through complementary and consistent approaches.



Do families know who to contact in the school if their child is having difficulties?

Additional support

At the third level of the cone, schools and families work in partnership to support those students who are experiencing particular learning, social, emotional, mental health and/or drug-related problems. Targeted programmes and individual counselling and consultation with parents and families may be needed.

Ideally at this level there is two-way communication and a partnership approach between relevant school staff (such as teachers and welfare/pastoral care personnel) and family members.



Are there good community networks to meet the needs of vulnerable students and their families?

Assessment and referral

The fourth level of the cone targets partnership approaches directed to students at risk and in need of specific interventions. Students at risk are not only those vulnerable to or involved in problematic drug use. Intervening and providing community supports and services can encompass a range of behaviours that put a young person at risk of poor educational and health outcomes.

¹ This material has been adapted from the *MindMatters* programme, *SchoolMatters* (pp 20–21) and *CommunityMatters* (p 6).

At this level, there is a need for strong partnerships with community networks and agencies so students and their families can access appropriate support and services. The extent of family involvement and the approach to partnership at the individual level will depend on the risks a student faces.



Part 6, **Tool 6** provides a sample audit tool that you can use with key stakeholders to review current family–school partnerships at each of the four levels described in Figure 1.2. Part 4 includes ideas for how to involve key stakeholders, and a process for reviewing and developing partnership strategies across the whole school.



MindMatters takes a whole of school approach to student wellbeing with a focus on the mental health and wellbeing of secondary school students. Within this resource, *CommunityMatters* acknowledges the importance of engaging local communities in a whole school approach to promote students' emotional wellbeing. A range of valuable tools and ideas that complement *Strengthening Family–School Partnerships* can be found at <http://cms.curriculum.edu.au/mindmatters/>

Definitions

Connectedness

A positive connection and sense of attachment. Connectedness through feelings of relatedness and belonging to family, school and community can foster young people's resilience, capacity for learning and wellbeing, and be a protective factor against the risk of problematic drug use.

Drug education

The school's policies, programmes and practices that are designed to enhance students' health and wellbeing and provide students with the capacity to make informed decisions to reduce drug-related harm for themselves and others.

Families

'There is abundant evidence that Australian families are undergoing rapid change. The diversity of families is evident in the growth of non-traditional family structures. Family structure can be defined in terms of parents' relationships to children in the household (for example, biological or non-biological), parents' marital status and relationships history (for example, divorced, separated, remarried), the number of parents in the family, and parents' sexual orientation.' (Wise, 2003, in 'Draft Family–School Partnerships Framework', 2004)

Family–School Action Team

A dedicated group of committed teachers, school staff and parents who develop and coordinate partnership plans and activities, and can provide the basis for improving family–school links. In the REDI – for Parents context, the Family–School Action Team would focus on partnership plans and activities to nurture resilience and reduce drug-related harm within the school community.

Family–school partnerships

Family–school partnerships are collaborative relationships and activities centred on the learning, health and wellbeing of students. They involve school staff, parents, and other family and school community members. Effective partnerships are based on mutual trust and respect, and shared responsibility for the education, health and wellbeing of the children and young people at the school. ('Draft Family–School Partnerships Framework', 2004)

Health and wellbeing

Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. Wellbeing refers to the overall healthy state of a person's life, which is impacted upon by factors such as education, work, social relationships and physical condition. (WHO, 1946)

Parents

In this resource, the term 'parents' includes all types of parental figures. For example, 'parents' includes carers or family members who are primarily responsible for and take a significant role in looking after the child. ('Draft Family–School Partnerships Framework', 2004)

Resilience

Resilience is the capacity to 'bounce back from adversity' (Wolin & Wolin, 1999). Being resilient involves the inherent and nurtured capacity of individuals to deal with life stressors in ways that enable them to lead healthy and fulfilling lives (Howard & Johnson, 1999). Feelings of connectedness to family, friends, community and school can nurture a young person's resilience and help protect against a range of risk behaviours, including problematic drug use. (*REDI for School Communities*, 2003)

School community

The school community is composed of a number of groups and agencies that work together to achieve the best educational and personal outcomes for students. These groups and agencies are generally considered to include students, families, school staff, other professionals, other support staff and volunteers.

Part 2 Resilience, schools and families

This part:

- provides information on the importance of nurturing resilience in young people to help them to learn and thrive, both at home and at school
- presents the risk and protective factors that can impact on a young person's capacity to cope with adversity
- outlines the value of family and school collaboration in helping young people to negotiate the challenges that can occur across the school years.

Resilience, risk and protective factors

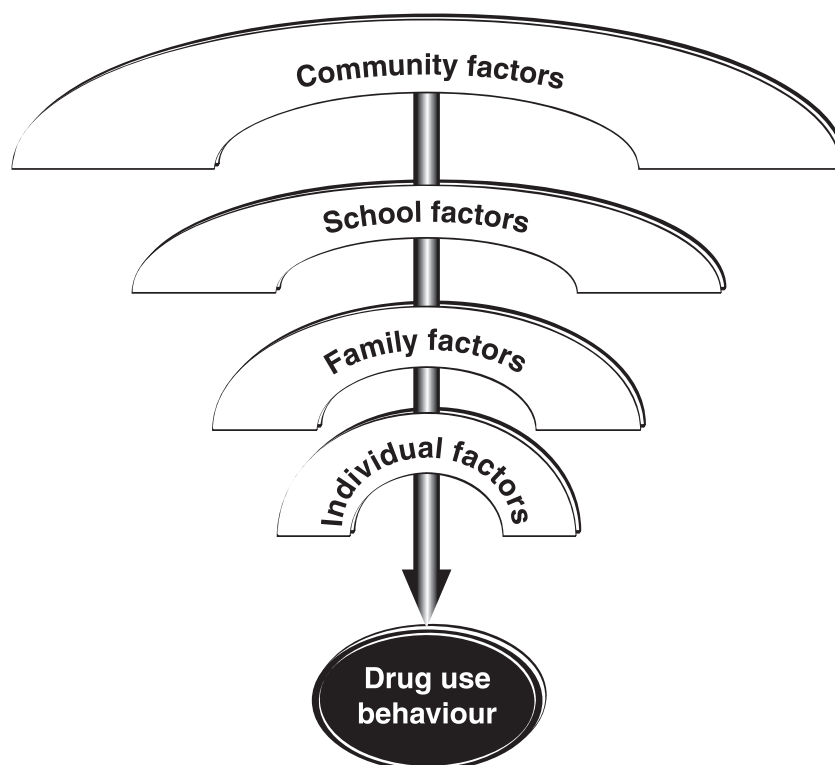
'Resilience is the ability to bounce back from adversity' (Wolin & Wolin, 1999). It's been called 'the happy knack of being able to bungy jump through the pitfalls of life – to rebound and spring back after the hard times' (Fuller, 2001a). Research into resilience has its origins in the observation that many people who have been exposed to extremely adverse circumstances go on to lead successful, happy lives. Researchers wanted to find out what factors in a person's life led them to be resilient in the face of adversity – ie the 'protective' factors. They also wanted to identify the kinds of things that might work against a person's resilience – ie the 'risk' factors.

Risk and protective factors

Recent research has identified the risk factors that increase the likelihood of substance abuse problems and the protective factors that help buffer young people against the likelihood of these problems. These factors operate at four main levels of influence in a young person's life:

1. the individual
2. his/her family
3. his/her school
4. his/her community.

For a school community undertaking prevention, it is worth noting that many social problems have risk and protective factors in common. That is, similar risk factors are causally related to a range of outcomes of concern such as depression, school alienation, and substance abuse. Even by targeting only a small number of risk factors, a school community can have a positive impact on a number of outcomes. Similarly, enhancing just a small number of protective factors will reduce the incidence and severity of a variety of problem outcomes for young people. (Western Australia Department of Education, 2001)



(Source: Adapted from Spooner, Hall & Lynskey, 2001, p 61)

Figure 2.1: Influences model

The influences model in Figure 2.1 makes clear the multiple and interconnected factors that can influence a young person's drug use behaviour. For families and schools it is useful to remember that while some factors are within their scope of influence, others are not. When seeking to prevent drug-related harm, it is valuable to consider the range of risk and protective factors operating across each of these areas of influence, and what can be usefully done to bolster the protective factors in a young person's life.



Part 6, **Tool 2** provides a summary of risk and protective factors that can act at community, school, family and individual levels.

Resilience and enhancing protective factors

Resilience and the capacity to cope with adversity are not simply a matter of fate. Young people, whatever their context, can be nurtured in their resilience and capacity to learn and thrive, through experiencing positive relationships and supportive environments, particularly when this occurs within family and school settings.

Of the social environments that influence young people's behaviour, family and school are the most important. (Resnick et al, 1997)

Research has demonstrated that nurturing resilience through family and school connectedness provides a strong protective effect against a range of risk behaviours, including substance abuse, suicidal tendencies and violence (Moon, Meyer & Grau, 1999, p 163).

Recent research² has identified important protective factors that contribute to the resilience of young people. These include:

- connectedness to family, peers, school and the community
- support, belonging and positive role models
- personal skills and a sense of purpose.

Connectedness to family, peers, school and the community

Positive connection to family, peers, school and the community can all be protective. Importantly, each of these influences on a young person's life can impact positively or negatively in helping provide healthy development and positive outcomes. When young people have poor relationships within their family, the role of the school and community in providing a sense of connection and positive relationships becomes more important. Where there are strong bonds across school, families and community, young people are provided with a network of relationships which are connected to others.

Support, belonging and positive role models

When young people have a strong sense of belonging and positive role models, they are in a better position to deal with challenges and hardships. A relationship with a caring, responsible adult can be protective and help support a young person by giving him/her a sense of belonging and a positive role model. These role models might be found in the family, the school and/or the community.

When there is strong parental and community involvement in the school, young people have a greater opportunity to connect with one or more positive role model/s and have access to a network of supports.

Personal skills and sense of purpose

Young people who feel capable and believe they have the skills and capacity to deal with challenges, and who have a sense of purpose, are in a better position to cope with adversity. In particular, young people who have the following attributes are more likely to respond effectively to challenges and setbacks:

- positive temperament and outlook
- particular talents and abilities
- good social and communication skills
- ability to problem solve
- a sense of their own identity and capacity to act effectively in the world (sense of self-worth and self-efficacy).

² Benard, 1997; Resnick et al, 1997; Fuller, 2001c; Howard & Johnson, 2000.

Importantly we know that:

- providing a sense of connectedness and supportive environments, and nurturing young people's skills and sense of purpose, are all important in helping to buffer against problem behaviours, including drug-related harm
- drug prevention efforts in school communities that seek to promote these factors across family, school and community settings are more likely to nurture young people's capacities to learn and thrive.

The school community can promote belonging, meaningful participation and high expectations

The protective factors that can help promote young people's resilience are based on three fundamental processes (Spooner, Hall & Lynskey, 2001):

1. creating a sense of belonging through caring relationships
2. providing meaningful participation and contribution
3. setting high but achievable expectations.

These processes provide positive environments and opportunities to develop skills and a sense of purpose and connectedness. The crucial issue for drug prevention and health promotion throughout a young person's school life is that, with appropriate supports and understanding, resilience can be strengthened within school, family and community settings. School communities that participate in collaborative relationships with their families and other school community members can help promote a network of connections and a sense of belonging, where young people feel safe, valued and purposeful.



To find out more about resilience and how it can be nurtured across the whole school community, go to the REDI website (www.redi.gov.au) where you will find a Reading Room with core publications as well as links to a range of other resources for schools and parents.



The REDI – for Parents *Parent Pack* supports parents and families in their understanding of strategies for drug prevention within their particular area of influence.

The 'roads' taken by individuals as they progress from conception to death, 'fork out in different directions at the kinds of crucial transition points that mark new experiences and relationships.' These pathways may be marked by an accumulation of risk factors or an accumulation of protective factors. (Western Australia Department of Education, 2001)

Developmental pathways

At various stages in life, individuals go through particular types of transitions that they may negotiate more or less successfully, depending on their personal capacity to cope and their skills and supports. Drug prevention from a resilience perspective suggests that families and schools can work in collaboration to help children and young people negotiate the transitions and challenges that occur during their schooling (Loxley et al, 2002).

By being aware of 'developmental pathways', schools and families can anticipate and plan for particular transition points in a young person's schooling when they may be vulnerable to particular challenges. Helping young people move through challenging events so they develop coping skills can also help buffer them from future harm and problem behaviours. A young person's capacity to cope with challenges and change can be fostered through positive social networks and support structures which provide clear expectations of behaviour, as well as opportunities to participate meaningfully in family, school and the broader community life.³

In particular, research suggests it is valuable to⁴:

- intervene early in life, and before or as a problem arises
- aim at reducing the accumulation of risks at multiple levels of influence (individual, family, school, community)
- use a coordinated approach
- make any interventions acceptable and accessible to those involved, including the young people themselves
- target transitions and prepare and support young people and their families through them
- evaluate preventive interventions to learn what makes a difference and why.

This research clearly suggests the importance of understanding developmental pathways so that young people can be supported through vulnerable stages and assisted earlier, if they are facing problems. Strong communication between families and schools is required if problems are to be tackled before or as they arise.

Figure 2.2 sets out a life course trajectory with a range of negative influences and outcomes across childhood and adolescence through to early adulthood. It presents a pathway of risk factors that culminate in poor health and educational outcomes, including problematic drug use. School communities that understand developmental pathways can seek to recognise, intervene and reduce the risk factors that might lead to such drastically poor outcomes in a young person's life.

³ This material has been adapted from *Get REDI* (Cahill & Robinson, 2006).

⁴ Cashmore, cited in Loxley et al, 2002.

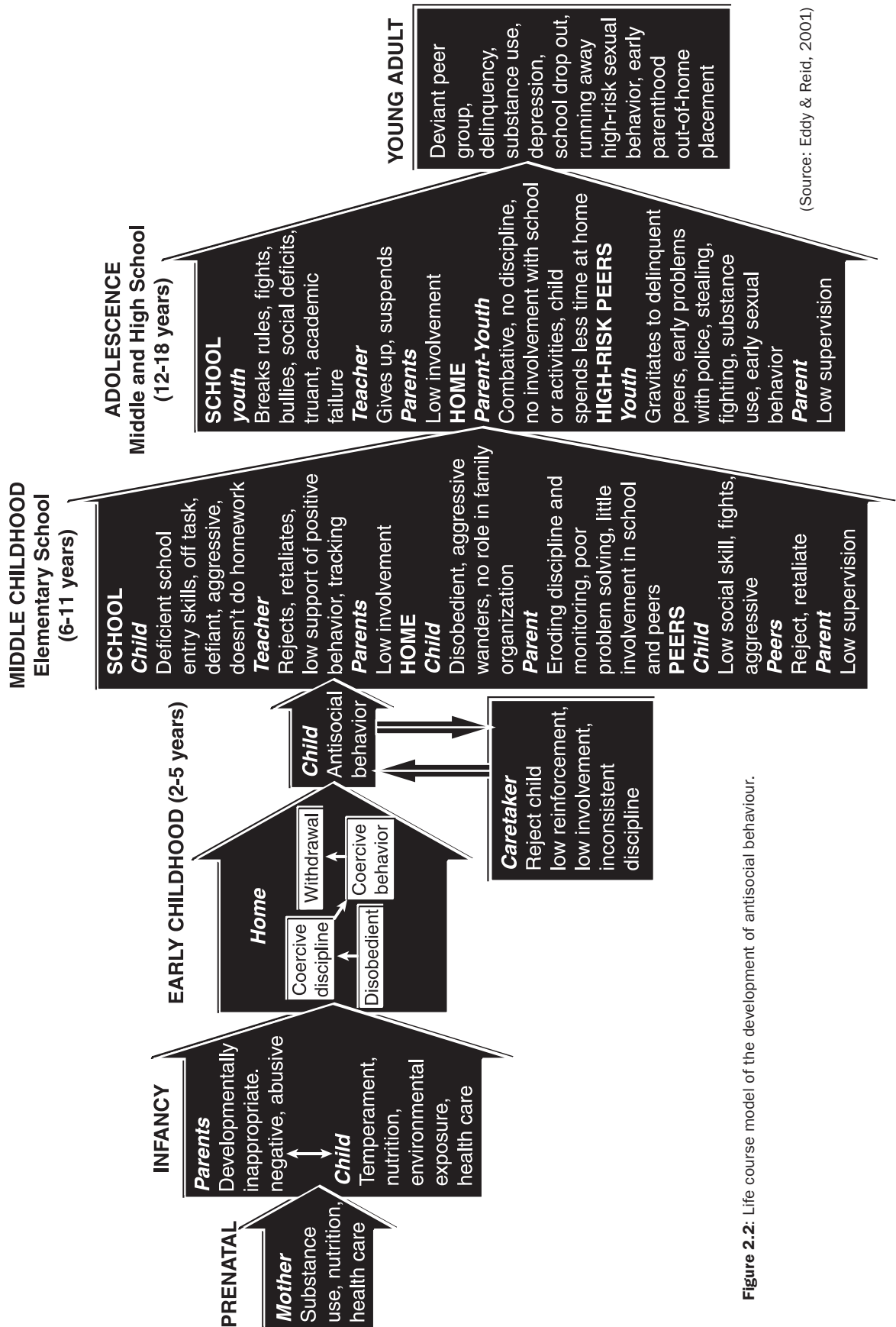


Figure 2.2: Life course model of the development of antisocial behaviour.

Common concerns and preventative measures

Nurturing protective factors and reducing risk factors at critical points in a young person's schooling can impact on academic success and the ability to adapt positively to life's adversities and range of experiences (Fuller, 2001c). Families and schools can work in partnership across the main phases of the school years to bolster the protective factors in a young person's life.



Part 6, **Tool 3** provides an outline of potential vulnerable stages and behaviours in a young person's life at school, and some preventative measures that the school and family can take.



Building Conversations focuses on some major transitions faced by young people in their development through the middle years of schooling. It provides professional development for teachers and facilitators, and activities to undertake at a parent event in which students, parents and others work together to nurture resilience and wellbeing within the broader school drug education programme.

Part 3 Family–school partnerships

This part:

- provides an overview of the features of productive family–school partnerships to nurture the resilience, learning and wellbeing of students
- considers the potential benefits of productive family–school partnerships
- describes some barriers to parent participation in family–school partnerships.

Features of productive family–school partnerships

Productive family–school partnerships that nurture the resilience and wellbeing of young people:

- focus on collaborative relationships and ways of working
- are based on mutual trust, respect and good communication
- acknowledge that each party has particular assets that can contribute to a young person’s learning and wellbeing
- share a commitment to the education and wellbeing of young people in the community
- draw on the strengths and complementary roles that each can contribute to strengthen a young person’s resilience and capacity for learning and health.⁵

Productive partnerships at the individual level

Productive partnerships can be found between the *individual* student, his/her parent/s and the teacher as shown in Figure 3.1.

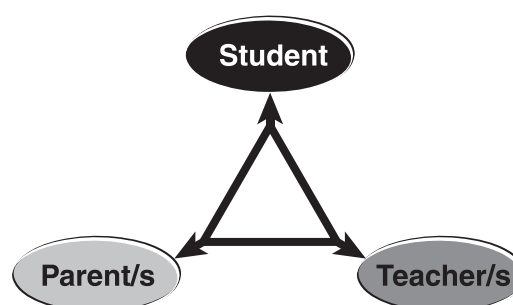


Figure 3.1: Communication and relationships at the student–parent–teacher level

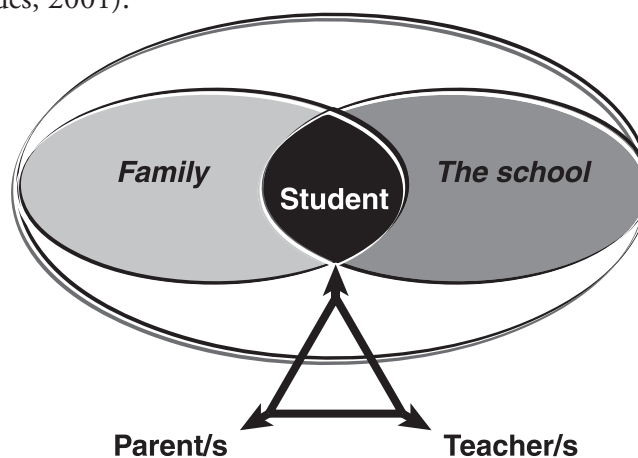
⁵ Adapted from 'Draft Family–School Partnerships Framework', 2004.

Individual parent-teacher meetings marked by mutual respect, empathy and sharing can have repercussions on the eventual engagement of parents in partnership activities implemented for all the parents of children in the school. (Deslandes, 2001, p 20)

In fact, most interactions and opportunities for productive relationships and communication between families and the school occur at this micro level between students, parents and teachers. As Figure 3.1 suggests, it is a transaction where the student is integral to the process and can operate at a personal level of two-way communication between each of the parties in the process.

Here, partnerships between family and school are likely to be focused primarily on promoting student learning. Research suggests that strengthening these relationships can be powerful in nurturing both learning and health and wellbeing for the individual student. It also has flow-on benefits for a positive school culture and school community partnerships.

Figure 3.2 shows that when there are strong relationships between students, families and school, there is greater opportunity for students to bring their two worlds together and to be nurtured in their learning and health through a consistent and complementary approach. When the spheres of family and school function together as partners engaged in a number of shared activities, the interaction and overlap will be greater, with consequent stronger promotion of student learning and wellbeing (Deslandes, 2001).



(Source: Adapted from Epstein's overlapping spheres of influence model, 2001)

Figure 3.2: Overlapping spheres of influence model

However, there can be barriers in each of these relationships and these can adversely affect the student's learning, health and wellbeing. These barriers are discussed in more detail at the end of this part. While it is beyond the scope of this resource to address each, it is important to keep in mind that strengthening student-teacher-parent bonds can be an important component for a partnership approach to nurturing a young person's learning, resilience and wellbeing, including around issues of problematic drug use.

Figure 3.3 indicates where you can find further information within the REDI suite of resources to assist in strengthening each of the bonds at the individual level.

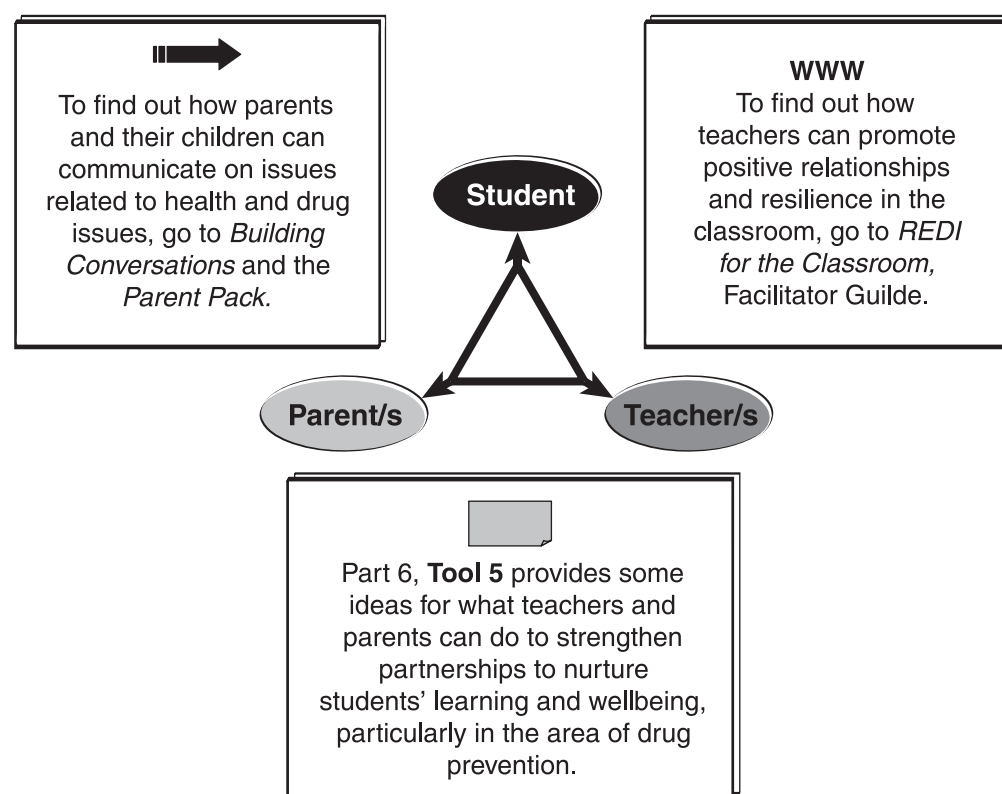


Figure 3.3: REDI resources to assist in strengthening bonds at the student–teacher–parent level

Family–School Partnerships Framework

A useful way to consider productive partnerships across an individual student's family and the school, as well as across the whole school community, is the 'Draft Family–School Partnerships Framework', 2004. Using this framework, *Strengthening Family–School Partnerships* suggests that there are seven key dimensions for productive family–school partnerships aimed at nurturing students' learning, health and wellbeing:

1. understanding of roles
2. connecting home and school learning
3. communicating
4. participating
5. decision making
6. collaborating beyond the school
7. building community and identity.



Part 6, **Tool 1** provides a fuller description of these seven key dimensions of family–school partnerships for nurturing resilience and reducing drug-related harm.



To find out more about the Family–School Partnerships Framework and how it is being developed within Australian schools, go to: <http://www.acsso.org.au/fsp.htm>

Parent participation and engagement

School staff, parents and the broader community need to determine for themselves the extent of parent/family engagement and the ways partnerships can best function within their school community. There is a range of issues that can impact on the way parents and schools view each other and wish to engage in a partnership approach to students' learning, health and wellbeing.

Continuum of participation and engagement

It is useful to remember that:

Parents and family members might be engaged with the school along a continuum of engagement.

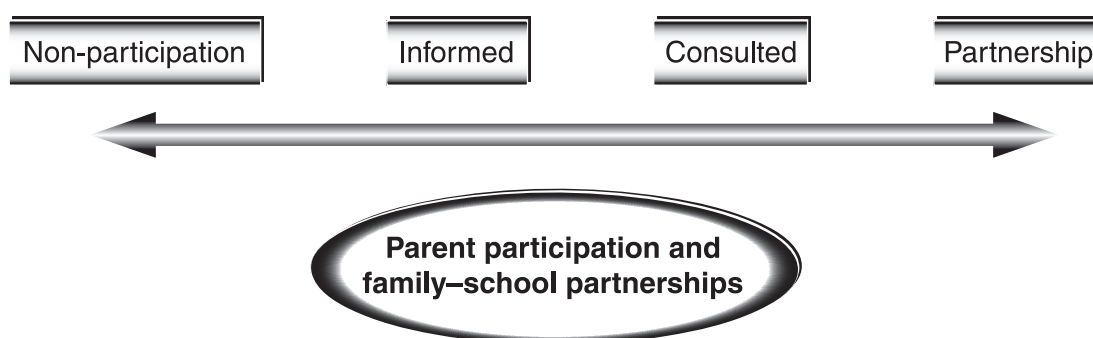


Figure 3.4: The continuum of parent participation in family-school partnerships

Figure 3.4 illustrates this continuum. It ranges from:

non-participation



to parents and families being informed about aspects of their child's schooling but with no real involvement



to parents being consulted by the school in such a manner that influences the way the school interacts with students and their families



to a comprehensive partnership where families and the school work in collaboration on issues that impact on their children's learning, health and wellbeing.

The extent of participation may vary for the same family across their child's schooling, depending upon a range of factors including the age of the child, family pressures and learning needs. Parental engagement and participation in partnerships across all aspects of a their child's learning and wellbeing is not always feasible or appropriate with all families and at all times.

It is important to recognise that the nature and extent of partnerships between the school and individual families is fluid. Partnership with a family may be extremely active when time and circumstances permit, while at other times it may be less apparent or possible.



To access a literature review (Thompson, 2001) on parent participation and issues that can impact on levels of involvement, go to the Parent Participation Project Home Page at <http://www.education.tas.gov.au/ooe/ppp/default.htm>

Benefits of productive partnerships

Where there is strong parental engagement and family–school partnerships are productive, there can be positive results for all concerned. These benefits may include the following:

For students

- improved academic performance and motivation to do well in all areas of school life
- enhanced wellbeing and resilience
- improved environments for learning where their needs are more adequately addressed as a result of the effective channels of communication between families and schools
- enhanced connectedness and sense of belonging
- stronger network of supports for preventing and reducing drug-related harm to self and others.

For parents/families

- enhanced sense of adequacy, self-worth and self-confidence in relation to parenting
- new ideas for helping their children learn as a result of working with the school
- increased knowledge of child development and factors they can enhance to promote their child's wellbeing and resilience
- strengthened social networks and support agencies

- better chance that problems around behaviour, substance abuse, violence and mental health will be effectively addressed
- strengthening of family relationships and resilience.

For school staff

- better parent and community relationships
- better school climate and work environment
- added assistance and support to address the wellbeing and emotional needs of all students
- greater alignment of the academic and social programmes implemented at school to the values and practices of parents resulting in improved effectiveness.

For the broader school community

- enriched relationships and networks
- more active participation in community events
- stronger sense of community identity and positive climate
- greater capacity to learn and develop skills and strengths across the community
- enhanced community resilience and cohesion.

Possible barriers to parental engagement and productive family–school partnerships

A range of issues can act as barriers to parental engagement and impact on productive family–school partnerships. Broadly these can include:

- parental beliefs and experiences
- school climate, practices and beliefs.

Parental beliefs and experiences

Parental beliefs and experiences might include:

- lack of time or energy (possibly due to long hours at work or demanding family schedules)
- their own negative experiences of schooling
- embarrassment or shyness about their own educational level, cultural background or linguistic abilities
- lack of understanding or information about the structure of the school and accepted communication channels

It is more likely that parents will decide to engage in school activities if they see this as part of their role as parents, believe they can positively influence the education and wellbeing of their child, and perceive their child and the school want them to be involved. (Deslandes, 2001, p 14)


- perceived lack of welcome by teachers and other staff
- teachers and the school leadership/executive assuming parents' disinterest or inability to help with children's academic and welfare needs
- feeling that their child does not wish them to be involved.

School climate, practices and beliefs

School climate, practices and beliefs might include the following:

- the school is perceived to be unfriendly and unwelcoming of 'outside involvement'
- invitations to engage parents and community members are rare
- invitations to become involved are limited to one segment of the school community and do not embrace the full diversity of parents, cultures and community
- teachers and staff are under pressure and time/resource constraints
- communication methods for engaging with families are poor
- policies that clarify roles and responsibilities are lacking
- knowledge about research findings on the academic and wellbeing benefits of engaging parents and community members is lacking.⁶

School communities that understand the particular barriers operating within their own context are in a better position to strengthen and sustain productive partnerships to nurture the resilience and wellbeing of all students and families.

 To consider the particular issues that can discourage some students, families and community groups from actively participating in the school community, go to *CommunityMatters* at http://cms.curriculum.edu.au/mindmatters/resources/comm_matters.htm

To consider barriers that might exist within your own school community, use *Resource Pack 11: Researching barriers to family–school relations* found on the Parent Participation Project website at <http://www.education.tas.gov.au/ooe/ppp/families/pack11.htm>

⁶ These barriers have been developed from a number of sources including Fuller (2001) *Parent Engagement in Post Compulsory Education: Literature Review*; McConchie (2004) *Family School Partnership Issues Paper*

Part 4 Steps to strengthen family–school partnerships

This part:

- provides an overview of the critical success factors for strengthening family–school partnerships
- describes a model step-by-step planning process for strengthening and sustaining productive family–school partnerships, with a focus on preventing and reducing drug-related harm.

Where do we start?

The goal of strengthening and sustaining family–school partnerships with a drug prevention focus can often be advanced by affirming and building on what the school is already doing, as well as understanding the critical factors that underpin successful family–school partnerships.

Critical success factors for strengthening family–school partnerships

Drawing on a range of sources,⁷ there are 12 critical success factors for strengthening and sustaining family–school partnerships as part of a whole school approach to drug prevention:

1. A committed leadership group, which includes parents, to steer the process.
2. Wide stakeholder support and involvement in the process, and strategies for strengthening family–school partnerships.
3. A culture of parent/family participation and engagement in school-based activities.
4. An agreed partnership plan, which addresses the local context and the needs of all students, with a focus on preventing and reducing drug-related harm.
5. Cultural sensitivity and inclusiveness in planning and implementing the partnership plan and strategies.
6. Agreed roles and responsibilities for parents, school staff and community members in the partnership plan.
7. Resources for and commitment to implementing the plan.
8. Staff, parent and community support for family–school partnership goals and strategies.

Partnership is a process, since it involves learning to work together and valuing each partner's positive contribution to the relationship.
(OECD, in Deslandes, 2001, p 11)

4

⁷ Cairney, 2000; Epstein, 2001, 2002; Goos, 2004; Fuller, 2001c; Fege, 2004; Macgregor, 2005

9. Educators and parents with the skills and capacity to interact and collaborate.
10. Student participation in partnership planning and activities.
11. Active partnership networks with a sufficient critical mass to support and share responsibilities and implementation strategies.
12. A process to evaluate the family–school partnership goals and activities to inform future initiatives.

These describe a set of indicators or success factors for effectively strengthening and sustaining partnership arrangements between the school and families which focus on nurturing students' learning, resilience and wellbeing. They provide a basis for the school leadership team to establish specific, contextualised success indicators or goals.

The school community action model

Material in this section has been drawn from *School Matters* pp 38–40, with amendments.

As noted above, the goal of strengthening and sustaining family–school partnerships with a drug prevention focus can often be advanced by affirming and building on what the school is already doing. The process described in this section is a school community action model, in which the school leadership team considers the factors for strengthening their family–school partnerships and involves the school community in addressing these through four steps, shown in Figure 4.1.

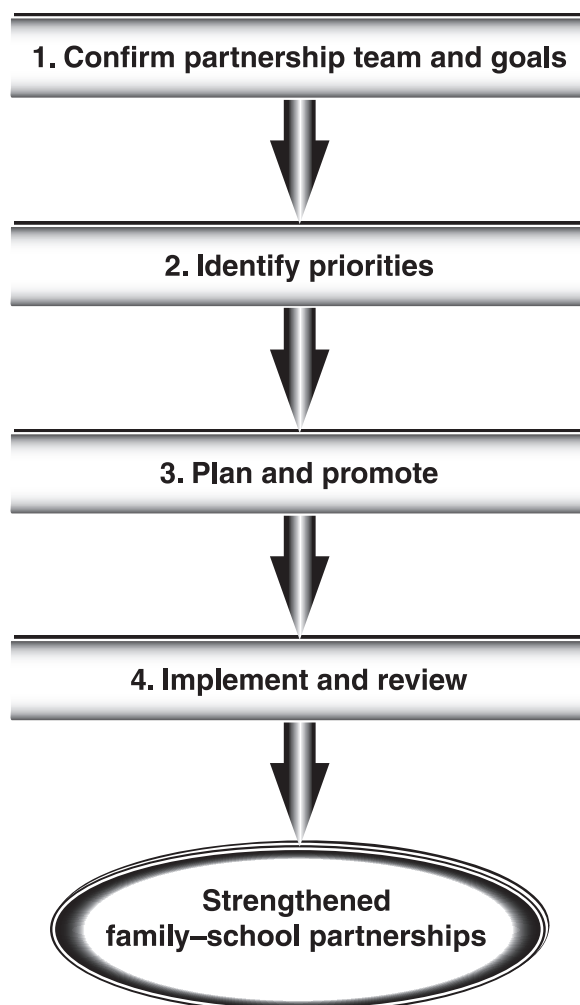


Figure 4.1: Steps to strengthen and sustain family–school partnerships



A number of tools are provided in Part 6 of this guide to assist the leadership team in addressing these steps:

Tool 4 sets out the 12 critical success factors in detail. It can be used by the school leadership team or school partnership team to help with initial planning. It includes a set of questions to help the team determine success indicators and strategies that are meaningful within the particular school context.

Tool 5 provides some possible roles that key stakeholder groups can undertake to strengthen and sustain family–school partnerships as part of a holistic and comprehensive approach to drug prevention and resilience building within the school community.

Tool 6 provides an audit tool that can be used to help engage the various stakeholders within the school community in the assessment of what the school is currently doing in terms of family–school partnerships. This can be used to assist in planning specific partnership-based strategies, to help prevent and reduce problematic drug use, which reflect the needs and priorities across the whole school community.

Tool 7 provides a strategic action plan which can be used by the partnership team to help plan specific family–school partnership strategies.

Tool 8 lists some sample activities a school community might implement to strengthen and sustain partnerships across the whole school to prevent and reduce drug-related harm.

1. Confirm partnership team and goals

An effective way to develop and gain momentum within the school is to form a core group of people from the school community – the partnership team – who are responsible for and interested in nurturing resilience and drug prevention through family–school partnerships. This core group may consist of the same personnel as the school leadership team, but it may also include others. Either way, establishing a new team or using the existing leadership team to lead and guide the process for drug prevention efforts and partnership strategies is a vital first step.

Who should be on this team?

The school principal and school executive are crucial to the success of any initiative. Their support and involvement is critical to strengthening partnerships. It is important to involve the school principal, either directly in the partnership team or by reporting to him/her.

As well, the partnership team may include representatives of key stakeholders. These include parents, key staff members who are involved in drug prevention/welfare, and student and community representatives, as appropriate. An important step at this point is to identify key stakeholders so they can be represented on this team.

Key stakeholders

A stakeholder is a person who has an interest or involvement in a process, organisation or community. Figure 4.2 sets out the main stakeholders who might be involved in the process and can contribute to strengthening family–school partnerships. (While there may be other stakeholders, this figure is indicative of some of the key groups within a school community who can take action to strengthen and sustain partnerships for preventing and reducing drug-related harm.)

This group might be known as the Family–School Action Team or the Student Welfare Team.

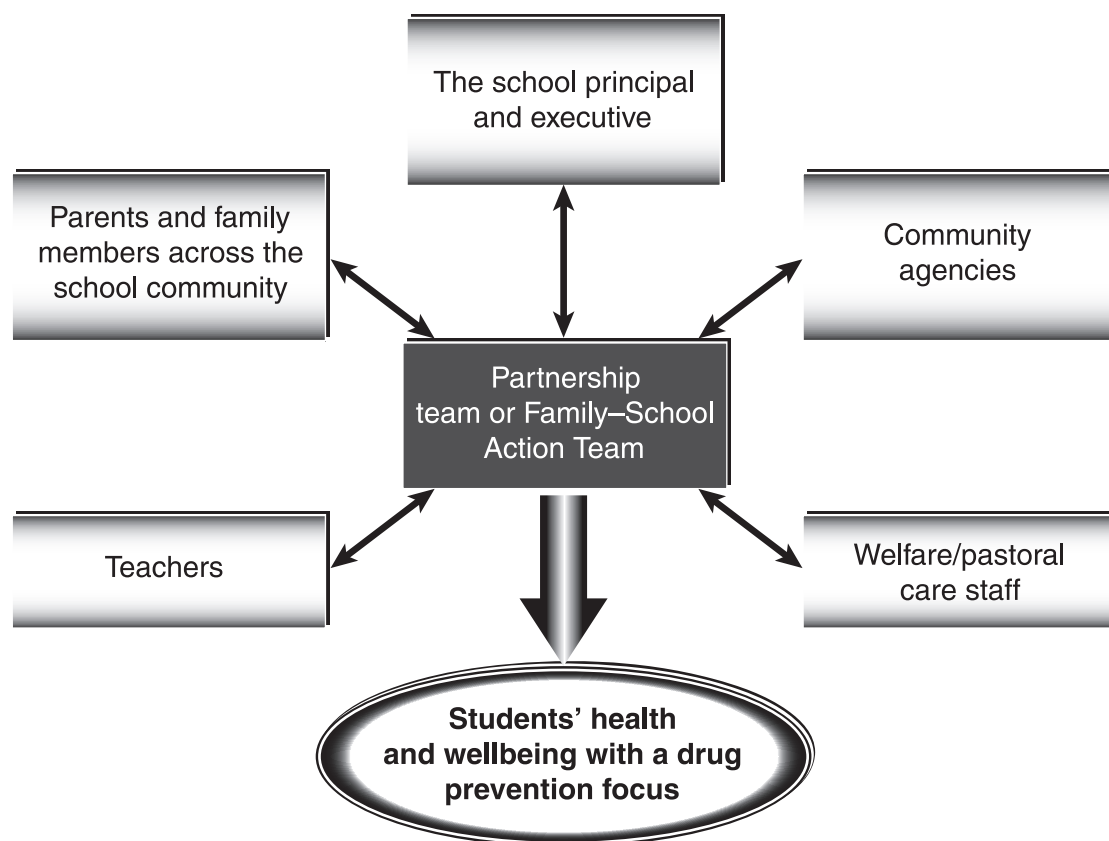


Figure 4.2: Possible key stakeholders within the school community and their relationship to the partnership team or Family–School Action Team

As Figure 4.2 shows, key stakeholders in the school community might include the school principal, representatives of school administration, staff in leadership and welfare/pastoral care roles, teachers, parents, students and community members and staff from health-related agencies/services.



Part 6, **Tool 5** provides some possible roles that key stakeholder groups can undertake to strengthen and sustain family–school partnerships as part of a holistic and comprehensive approach to drug prevention and resilience building within the school community.

Goals

It is important that the partnership team includes a representative from each of these groups so that all key stakeholders across the community can be involved in the partnerships process. This will assist the team to take into consideration the diversity of interests and needs of parents, family members and community members, and when and how they might be involved, when deciding on their goals.



Some key considerations at this stage may include:

- Do we have a partnership team or Family–School Action Team who can promote family–school partnerships? If not, who might be members?
- How will the interests of all families and sections of the school community be represented? (For example, all parents and students including those from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and culturally and linguistically diverse communities, teachers, welfare staff, community agencies, etc.)
- How might this partnership team fit with other school initiatives for promoting student health and wellbeing?
- How broad should the scope of the partnership team be and what support and resources might it need?
- What will be the roles and responsibilities of this team?
- How might this team work productively with the school executive, school council and parent representative bodies?
- What will be the critical success factors for strengthening and sustaining family–school partnerships with a drug prevention focus in our school community? What does this mean for the team’s goals?



Part 6, **Tool 5** provides an outline of a model Family–School Action Team and actions/strategies it might take to strengthen and sustain partnerships.

Part 6, **Tool 4** sets out the 12 critical success factors for family–school partnerships. The school leadership team or school partnership team may find this helpful for initial planning. It includes a set of questions to help determine success indicators and strategies that are meaningful within the particular school context. These may assist in setting goals.

2. Identify priorities

In this step the partnership team works with the broader school community to identify the priority issues for strengthening partnerships as part of a whole school approach to drug prevention. This involves a process of:

- collecting information about what the school is currently doing in its partnerships across the spectrum from prevention through to intervention
- determining priority needs for improvement.

A sample process the partnership team may follow includes:

- gathering information about the current situation as perceived by a range of stakeholders within the school community using an audit tool or other information gathering process
- reflecting on and discussing within the partnership team and with other interested stakeholders, the implications from the information gathering process
- identifying the important priorities for strengthening partnerships as part of a whole school approach to drug prevention.



Some key considerations may include:

- What information gathering tool/s will we use to identify the current situation?
- Who will be involved in the process and how will it be conducted?
- What does the audit (or other information gathering process) tell us about the strengths and gaps in our partnerships
 - across the whole school environment?
 - at the level of learning activities and curriculum for fostering resilience and wellbeing?
 - at the level of those students needing additional help?
 - at the level of those students requiring referral and treatment services?
- What issues do the various stakeholders want addressed?
- What are the main priorities for enhancing family–school partnerships to address drug prevention issues within our context?



Part 6, **Tool 6** provides a sample audit tool, which the partnership team may distribute to stakeholders within the school community, to review their current approach to drug prevention and intervention across school and family partnership policies and practices.



To access some information gathering tools and strategies, which can be used to strengthen family–school relationships and parent engagement, go to the Parent Participation Project Home Page at <http://www.education.tas.gov.au/ooe/ppp/default.htm>

3. Plan and promote

This step involves developing a strategic plan in response to the outcomes of the consultation and identification of priorities in Step 2. This involves:

- developing a strategic plan for the improvements your school community wishes to make
- determining how this can be promoted within the school community.

Your strategic action plan can:

- identify the objectives for strengthening partnerships for a comprehensive whole school approach to fostering resilience and reducing drug-related harm
- identify and record the current situation
- identify what else needs to be found out/researched so the strategic plan can be implemented
- develop strategies to address the stated objectives
- establish the resources required to facilitate the strategies
- identify indicators for monitoring how well the strategic plan is operating
- identify means to promote the various strategies and communicate the plan to the broader school community.



Some key considerations may include:

- Who will be involved in the strategic planning process and how will it be conducted?
- Does the strategic plan address the priorities identified (in Step 2)?
- Is the strategic plan detailed enough?
- What strategies will be effective and feasible within the school community context?
- What factors might be barriers to its implementation and what might be done to address these?
- What skills and resources will be important for the implementation process?

- How will the plan be promoted and to whom?
- How should the plan be monitored to help guide its success?



Part 6, **Tool 7** provides a sample strategic planning tool.

Part 6, **Tool 5** provides some possible roles that key stakeholder groups can undertake to strengthen and sustain family–school partnerships as part of a holistic and comprehensive approach to drug prevention and resilience building within the school community

Part 6, **Tool 8** provides some sample activities a school community might engage in to promote family–school partnerships with a drug prevention focus



To access resource packs with strategies for strengthening family–school relationships and parent engagement, go to the Parent Participation Project Home Page at <http://www.education.tas.gov.au/ooe/ppp/default.htm>

4. Implement and review

This step involves:

- implementing the planned activities described in the strategic plan
- reviewing the effectiveness of those activities.

Implementation and reviewing the planned activities is guided by the partnership team. The review includes monitoring the progress of activities against the strategic plan and evaluating the outcomes to determine what else might be done in the future.



Some key considerations may include:

- How often does the partnership team need to meet during the implementation?
- Are the activities happening as planned and who is monitoring this?
- Is communication being maintained with all stakeholders to ensure they are aware of and comfortable with the activities?
- What has been achieved? How do we know?
 - Have improvements occurred across the whole school environment?
 - Have improvements occurred within the area of the school curriculum?
 - Have improvements occurred within the area of students needing additional help?

- Have improvements occurred within the area of students needing referral and treatment?
- What might we do differently next time?

Part 5 Resources and further information

This part includes a comprehensive list of resources that may be useful for members of the school community in strengthening family–school partnerships and seeking to nurture resilience and reduce drug-related harm within the school community. These resources cover a range of issues and are grouped under particular areas of interest and support.

Key websites

A wealth of resources exist to assist schools in the development, enhancement and promotion of parent engagement and partnerships in relation to student health and wellbeing. The majority of these resources are web-based and easily accessible. The following is a selection of these resources.

The REDI website

www.redi.gov.au

This site is part of the REDI suite of resources. It hosts a comprehensive database of information for use in school drug education, and contains a selection of useful articles, key publications, statistical information, and links to other websites on school drug education.

‘Draft Family–School Partnerships Framework’, 2004

<http://www.acsso.org.au/fsp.htm>

This draft publication has been commissioned by the Australian Government Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST). It is intended as a resource for school communities to encourage and assist the generation of family–school partnerships.

MindMatters

<http://cms.curriculum.edu.au/mindmatters/index.htm>

The *MindMatters* website contains information and resources related to the *MindMatters* national mental health programme. It provides a suite of resources specifically developed to assist secondary schools in their promotion of mental health and wellbeing among their youth.

A generic list of **parenting resources** can be accessed from the *MindMatters* website including links to sites containing:

- practical tips, information and resources on parenting mental health, drug education, health and wellbeing issues for teachers, parents and students
- information on services and supports for families, parents, children and young people across a range of issues including mental health, drug education, health and wellbeing.

Families Matter

<http://www.familiesmatter.org.au>

The *MindMatters* programme is currently in the first stage of a national roll-out of a resource, *Families Matter*, which develops the parent/family elements of the *MindMatters* initiative and will complement other school–parent engagement and partnership initiatives.

Other websites

Drugs and drug-related issues

The Australian Drug Foundation website: <http://www.adf.org.au/>

The Australian Drug Foundation Drug Info Clearinghouse:
<http://www.druginfo.org.au/>

Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing National Drugs Campaign website: <http://www.drugs.health.gov.au/index.htm>

The Centre for Youth Drug Studies (CYDS), which investigates drug use by young people: <http://www.adf.org.au/cyds/index.html>

The Australian Drug Information Network (ADIN):
<http://www.adin.com.au/>

The National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre:
<http://ndarc.med.unsw.edu.au/ndarc.nsf>

Drug Related Services in Victoria:
<http://www.health.vic.gov.au/drugservices/index.htm>

School Drug Education:
<http://www.dest.gov.au/schools/drugeducation/default.htm>

Parenting

Health and Mental Health: http://cms.curriculum.edu.au/mindmatters/resources/links_healthlinks.htm

Various fact sheets about drugs, teenagers and what families can do:
<http://druginfo.adf.org.au/>

Resources for parents:

<http://www.adf.org.au/store/search.asp?audience=Parents>

Drug information for parents (in 22 languages):

<http://www.mhcs.health.nsw.gov.au/health-public-affairs/mhcs/publications/5910.html>

If you think your child is using drugs (in 14 languages):

<http://www.mhcs.health.nsw.gov.au/health-public-affairs/mhcs/publications/3095.html>

Parenting and Child Health: <http://www.cyh.com/SubDefault.aspx?p=98>

Talking to teenagers about alcohol (in 16 languages):

<http://www.mhcs.health.nsw.gov.au/health-public-affairs/mhcs/publications/4435.html>

Victorian Parenting Centre:

<http://www.vicparenting.com.au/vp/index.php>

Family–school partnerships

Department of Education Tasmania: Office for Curriculum, Leadership and Learning – Parent Participation Project website:

<http://www.education.tas.gov.au/ooe/ppp/>

The Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NWREL):

<http://www.nwrel.org/index.html>

<http://www.nwrel.org/scpd/sirs/3/cu6.html>

Part 6 Toolkit

This part includes eight ‘tools’ to assist the school leadership team and/or the school partnership team in their efforts to strengthen and sustain family–school partnerships to promote student learning and wellbeing, with a focus on drug prevention.

Tool 1: Family–school partnerships for nurturing resilience and wellbeing

There are seven key dimensions where schools and families might work in productive partnership as part of a health promoting strategy aimed at a range of benefits for students, including drug prevention.⁸

1 Understanding of roles

Families and the school reach a mutual understanding of each other's roles and priorities.

As the primary educators of their children, parents/caregivers have a lasting influence on their children's attitudes and outcomes for their learning, health and wellbeing. Families and schools need to understand each other's roles and priorities, including when and how parents may support the learning and wellbeing of their child. Here the focus is on schools and families reaching out to understand and embrace the needs of all families within the school community as part of supporting the social and learning environment of its students.

2 Connecting home and school learning

Learning between school and home is linked and reinforced.

This involves families and schools working together to reinforce learning and wellbeing by valuing and using the skills and knowledge children bring from home to school and from school to home. It includes parents working with their child on home-based activities and the school providing learning that is meaningful to home contexts and needs.

3 Communicating

Communication between family and school is two-way and mutual.

This involves effective communication from school to home and home to school that provides the opportunity for mutual understanding and accommodates the diversity of all families. Effective and reciprocal communication between families and the school is fundamental to developing trust between these two key influences in a young person's life and to promote consistent, positive messages around health and wellbeing.

4 Participating

Families contribute their time and strengths to activities in and beyond the school.

Families contributing their time, energy and expertise can support the health and wellbeing of students, staff and parents. This involves families participating in school-based activities that support students and the school in nurturing learning, resilience and wellbeing. It includes parents and families volunteering for a range of activities that might occur within or beyond the school, such as sports days, community events, etc.

⁸ These dimensions and their descriptions have been adapted from the 'Draft Family-Schools Partnerships Framework', 2004 to reflect the focus here on drug education and prevention.

Tool 1: Family–school partnerships for nurturing resilience and wellbeing, cont.

5 Decision-making

Collaboration between families, schools and community on school policy and practices.

This includes families participating in the decisions within the school that can impact on the health and wellbeing of students and the broader school community. This might be at the whole school level in terms of school policy and guidelines on issues impacting on health and wellbeing, through to deciding how families and schools might work together on drug referral options in the community.

6 Collaborating beyond the school

Community resources are integrated for nurturing resilience and wellbeing of the school community.

This involves schools and families working together to identify, locate and integrate community resources to strengthen and support schools, students and families, and in return improve the quality of life in the school community.

7 Building community and identity

The cultures, traditions, values and relationships of the community are honoured.

This involves schools and families working together to improve the quality of life of the community while honouring the culture, traditions, values and relationships in that community. It includes activities that shape students' identity and culture and which build a sense of community in each student. Families and the school working in productive partnership promote a sense of connectedness to community. Here the resilience of the whole community is nurtured through fostering cultural renewal and a sense of belonging among students, families and the broader school community.

Tool 2: Risk and protective factors for young people

Level	Risk Factors	Protective Factors
Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Availability of drugs Poverty Transition in schooling and into the community Low neighbourhood attachment and poor community organisation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cultures of cooperation Stability and connection Good relationships with an adult outside the family Opportunities for meaningful contribution
School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Poor relationships in school Academic failure, especially in the middle years Early and persistent antisocial behaviour and bullying Low parental interest in school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A sense of belonging and fitting in Positive achievements at school Having someone outside the family who believes in you Attendance at preschool Continued attendance at school
Family	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Family history of problematic alcohol or drug use Inappropriate family management Family conflict Parental substance use that interferes with family rituals Harsh/coercive and/or inconsistent parenting Family instability or conflict Favourable parental attitudes towards risk-taking behaviours 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A sense of belonging or connectedness to family Feeling loved and respected Proactive problem solving and minimal family conflict, especially in infancy Maintenance of family rituals Warm relationship with at least one parent/caregiver Absence of high family conflict/disharmony 'Good fit' between parents and child
Individual/ Peer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Constitutional factors, eg highly sensitive Seeing peers taking drugs Friends who engage in problem behaviours Early initiation of problem behaviour 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Constitutional factors, eg socially responsive, optimistic temperament High intelligence (when not paired with sensitive temperament) Special talent, curiosity, zest for life Achievements during adolescence such as work success

(Source: Drug Policy Expert Committee (2000) *Developing a framework for preventing drug problems: an issues paper*, Victorian Department of Human Services, Melbourne)

Tool 3: Common concerns and preventative measures⁹

The tables below outline the common concerns that arise at different stages in a young person's schooling and some preventative measures that the school and family can take to foster resilience and connectedness.

Early primary school years

Entry into school is an important time to establish collaboration between families and schools so they can mutually support children in the development of basic social skills. These include emotional regulation, concentration and playing/working with others.

At this stage of schooling it is the quality of children's relationships and feeling safe, valued and able to learn that are more significant to their life trajectory and likelihood of future drug-related harm than providing drug education curriculum.

Research suggests that the following are important issues for families and schools to consider in the promotion of resilience.

Common concerns at this stage of development	Important preventative measures at this stage of schooling
Aggressive behaviour This can indicate risk of a range of problems (girls' aggressive behaviour may indicate higher risk than boys at this stage of life)	School and home communicate about any aggressive behaviour School and families work together to maximise consistency in approaches to learning and promote habits of impulse control and coping skills Schools and parents/families work in partnership to apply programmes and strategies for resolving conflict (eg Stop, Think, Do)
Lack of positive or clear expectations about school	High and positive expectations about school are promoted by families, teachers and the school community
Adjustment between school and home	Families and schools communicate and collaborate to ease child's transition into new environment A range of opportunities for family involvement where the worlds of school and home are bridged Positive school climate where families and students feel included and safe

⁹ The following section has been adapted from Fuller, A (2001) 'Background Paper on Resilience', presented to the Northern Territory Principal's Association.

Tool 3: Common concerns and preventative measures, cont.

Middle to upper primary years

In the middle to upper primary years of school, friendship and developing social competency are important for a child to adjust and thrive. Research suggests that at this time, setting high and positive expectations about school and achievement continue to be critical to future success.

Research suggests that the following are important issues for families and schools to consider in the promotion of resilience.

Common concerns at this stage of development	Important preventative measures at this stage of schooling
Bullying behaviour This can indicate a range of behavioural problems that might develop later, including problematic substance use	Intervene with programmes to prevent bullying and develop positive peer relationships Families and the school work in partnership to establish anti-bullying policies (healthy relationships) and effective reporting and intervention methods School and home communicate about any anti-social behaviours School and families work to maximise consistency and promote habits of impulse control and coping skills Schools and parents/families work in partnership to develop strategies to stop bullying behaviour
Lack of positive or clear expectations about school	High and positive expectations about school promoted by families and teachers. This should cover the full range of school activities from academic and sporting to social and community involvement
Adjustment between school and home	Families and schools communicate and collaborate to support the child's development and increasing learning demands A range of opportunities for family participation where the worlds of school and home are connected Make learning fun and meaningful Positive school climate where families and students feel included and safe

Transition between primary and secondary schooling

The shift from primary to secondary schooling is often accompanied by a lowering of self-esteem, especially for girls and low achieving students. It is important that school programmes are structured in the first year of secondary school to reduce the number of staff and peers that each student has to interact with. This should be supported by curriculum materials that promote a sense of belonging, mastery and achievement in students (Fuller, p 10).

Tool 3: Common concerns and preventative measures, cont.

Parent-child relationships undergo important transitions during adolescence, including a decrease in time spent with parents and a shift from dependency to mutual reciprocity. Parents play a significant role in supporting secure attachment during these transitions. Adolescents benefit from parental support that encourages the development of autonomy but continues to monitor and be emotionally connected. Specific parenting skills that promote attachment, a sense of security and autonomy include:

- psychological availability
- warmth
- active listening
- behaviour monitoring
- limit setting
- acceptance of individuality
- negotiation of rules and responsibilities.

Parental support during stressful periods of transition (eg entry to high school) supports adolescents' resilience and positive adjustment to change.

Some common concerns at this stage of development	Important preventative measures at this stage of schooling
<p>Poor self-esteem, body image, peer relationships</p> <p>Lack of family connectedness</p>	<p>Restructure schools to reduce the number of subjects and interactions, as in Middle School programmes</p> <p>Continue anti-bullying programmes</p> <p>Provide transition programmes and strengthen relationships between teachers, students and families</p> <p>Provide parent/family forums to support successful transition</p> <p>Provide parent education that supports understanding of adolescence and development</p>
<p>Lack of positive or clear expectations about school</p>	<p>Promote high and positive expectations about school by families and teachers. This should cover the full range of school activities from academic and sporting to social and community involvement</p> <p>Provide clear boundaries and rules for behaviour</p>

Tool 3: Common concerns and preventative measures, cont.

Middle secondary school years

The middle years of high school are important ones for ongoing academic and life success. It is around this stage of schooling that young people who do not experience stimulating and relevant learning opportunities can become detached from school life. At this stage of life it is important to keep young people's learning and friendships diverse, and to support their personal expectations for success and their involvement in meaningful activities.

During Years 9 and 10, the gap between the top and bottom one per cent of students grows. It is also the peak time for onset of substance use and misuse, conduct disorder, eating disorders and depression. At this stage in a young person's life it is most important to keep his/her:

1. friendships diverse
2. life options broad
3. personal expectations of success high (Fuller, p 10).

Some common concerns at this stage of development	Important preventative measures at this stage of schooling
Family battles Social success (being 'cool') Finding a niche Parties Sex Drugs (tobacco, alcohol and illicit drugs)	Provide partnerships and networks and take students into the community, eg doing work experience or community volunteering Provide opportunities for meaningful community projects that contribute to a sense of belonging and purpose Increase/maintain experiential learning activities that support positive peer learning Schools and families provide opportunities for autonomy and independence while still monitoring and providing caring relationships Focus drug education on reducing harm Allocate specific member of staff to students at risk Provide parent/family forums with youth participation and opportunities for discussion and exploration of values and goals between parents and students Provide parent education that supports understanding of adolescence and development at this stage of life
Lack of positive or clear expectations about school	High and positive expectations about school promoted by families and teachers. This should cover the full range of school activities from academic and sporting to social and community involvement Clear boundaries and rules for behaviour

Tool 3: Common concerns and preventative measures, cont.

Senior secondary school years


In senior years of high school, young people have the challenge of formal external examinations and making the future transition to life beyond school. It can be a time of adventure, learning and growth. It can also be a time of fear, loss of confidence and insecurity about the unknown future. It is around this stage that young people will go through the rite of passage from adolescence to adulthood with important markers such as learning to drive, turning 18 and being recognised as an adult, which includes being able to vote and drink alcohol.

Some common concerns at this stage of development	Important preventative measures at this stage of schooling
Failing	Provide adult support/individual mentoring
Freedom	Provide opportunities for meaningful community projects that contribute to a sense of belonging and purpose
Finances	Schools and families provide opportunities for autonomy and independence while still monitoring and providing caring relationships
Sexuality	Maintain/enhance parent involvement
Depression	Allocate specific staff to students at risk
	Provide parent/family forums with youth participation and opportunities for discussion of future career goals and projects
	Provide parent education that supports understanding of late adolescence and key concerns issues that they could be facing at this stage of life


Tool 4: Success factors and strategies for strengthening family–school partnerships as part of a whole school approach to drug prevention

Success factors	Suggested strategies	Some questions for consideration	Our responses
1. Partnership team	<p>Form an organising group that includes parents (eg, a partnership team or Family-School Action Team)</p> <p><i>An organising group helps to develop and gain momentum, share the workload, educate and energise, provide a forum for a flow of ideas and is a key resource to guide and support activities for promoting family–school partnerships aimed at nurturing students' learning, resilience and wellbeing.</i></p>	<p>Do we have a partnership or Family-School Action Team who can promote family–school partnerships? If not, who might be members?</p> <p>How might this partnership team fit with other school initiatives for promoting students' health and wellbeing?</p> <p>How broad should the scope of this team be and what support and resources might it need?</p>	
2. Wide stakeholders support	<p>Gain the support of key stakeholders across the school community</p> <p><i>Key stakeholders in the school community include the school principal, and representatives of school administration, staff in leadership welfare/pastoral care roles, teachers, parents, students and community members including those from health-related agencies/services.</i></p>	<p>Who are our key stakeholders?</p> <p>What will be our approach for informing and gaining their support?</p> <p>Will we need particular strategies with different stakeholder groups?</p>	

Tool 4: Success factors and strategies for strengthening family–school partnerships as part of a whole school approach to drug prevention, cont.

Success factors	Suggested strategies	 Some questions for consideration	Our responses
3. A culture of parent engagement	<p>Build on the school community's relationships and traditions for including families within the school environment and activities</p> <p><i>It is usually easier for parents to engage with the school and their child's schooling where there is a relationship history and a culture of communication between families and the school.</i></p>	<p>What is the school's culture around family involvement?</p> <p>What are we doing well at the moment in terms of our relationships with parents and the broader community?</p> <p>What else might we want to do to build on our current relationships between families, the school and the broader community?</p>	
4. Identified needs and partnership plan that address local context and the needs of all students and their families	<p>Collect information to determine goals, priorities and a plan for partnerships aimed at a whole school approach to drug prevention and intervention</p> <p><i>Effective family–school partnerships will be most successful when they reflect the needs of students, parents, staff and the community. Using information gathering and consultation methods that are inclusive of all stakeholders will help capture diverse needs and priorities. Developing a strategic plan will help focus family–school partnership processes and activities.</i></p>	<p>Have we collected information about our partnerships aimed at a whole school approach to drug prevention and intervention?</p> <p>If so, how recently and does it meet our current initiatives for strengthening family–school relationships?</p> <p>What methods should we use to gather information and consult with stakeholders?</p> <p>When and how will we develop our strategic plan for family–school partnerships and who will be involved?</p>	


Tool 4: Success factors and strategies for strengthening family–school partnerships as part of a whole school approach to drug prevention, cont.

Success factors	Suggested strategies	 Some questions for consideration	Our responses
5. Agreed roles and responsibilities for parents, school staff and community	<p>Identify and agree on roles and responsibilities for the overall strategy as well as specific tasks that will promote partnerships</p> <p><i>Building and sustaining engagement between families and the school requires a high level of perseverance, organisation and communication. This is most likely to occur when roles and responsibilities are clearly understood and agreed upon. These can range from the overall leadership team guiding the family–school partnership strategy and related activities, through to the interaction between parents and the school for a student's learning and wellbeing.</i></p>	<p>Do we have agreed and documented roles and responsibilities for school staff and for parents on the learning and wellbeing of students?</p> <p>If so, are they appropriate? What else, if anything, might we need to consider in relation to nurturing the health and wellbeing of all students?</p> <p>Do we have agreed and documented roles and responsibilities for the leadership team guiding the family–school partnerships?</p> <p>Do we have agreed and documented roles and responsibilities for particular programmes and/or activities that are being run as part of our approach to engaging families in drug prevention and intervention?</p>	
6. Resources and commitment	<p>Provide adequate resources for programmes and practices</p> <p><i>Genuine resourcing of initiatives associated with promoting family–school partnerships (financial, material and human resources) is needed to build and sustain engagement between families and the school.</i></p>	<p>What resources are needed for our approach to family–school partnerships?</p> <p>How might we obtain the resources we need?</p>	


Tool 4: Success factors and strategies for strengthening family–school partnerships as part of a whole school approach to drug prevention, cont.

Success factors	Suggested strategies	Some questions for consideration	Our responses
7. Staff, parent and community support	<p>Promote family–school partnership goals, priorities and activities to staff, parents and community</p> <p><i>Creating an awareness of the needs of families and the benefits of family involvement in school will encourage staff and the broader community to support initiatives.</i></p>	<p>What will be the benefits of promoting our family–school partnership goals, priorities and activities for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • staff? • parents? • students? • community members? <p>What methods will we use to promote awareness of the needs of families and the benefits of family involvement in school?</p> <p>What, if any, sensitivities or barriers might we need to address to pursue our planned approach?</p>	
8. Cultural sensitivity and inclusiveness	<p>Draw on the strengths and diverse knowledge and skills of family members and the community</p> <p><i>Families and the community are more likely to engage with the school's practices and processes, and students are more likely to feel connected to school and home if partnership processes and activities demonstrate a strong understanding and acknowledgment of cultures and traditions.</i></p>	<p>How can we best identify and draw on the strengths and diverse knowledge and skills of family members and the community?</p> <p>What might be some enjoyable, rich experiences for students, staff and families when drawing on these assets?</p> <p>How can students' learning at home and at school acknowledge and draw upon the cultures and traditions of families within the school community?</p>	

Tool 4: Success factors and strategies for strengthening family–school partnerships as part of a whole school approach to drug prevention, cont.

Success factors	Suggested strategies	 Some questions for consideration	Our responses
9. Educators and parents with capacities for interacting and collaborating	<p>Provide professional development to school leaders, staff and parents to raise awareness and skills in interacting and partnering in the learning and development of their young people</p> <p><i>The leadership team, teachers and parents may need to develop their knowledge and skills for interacting and collaborating with families and others in activities related to nurturing students' learning, health and wellbeing.</i></p>	<p>What knowledge and skills do our partnership or Family–School Action Team currently have, and what else might be needed to help guide and lead our strategy?</p> <p>Do school staff need professional development on how to interact and partner with parents and family members in nurturing students' learning and wellbeing?</p> <p>Would parents value and benefit from learning activities that support their capacity to interact with school staff and participate in activities, as well as communicate with their own child?</p> <p>What might be the best way to provide any development activities and who should be involved?</p>	
10. Student participation in planning, programmes and practices	<p>Involve students in activities that promote engagement between families and the school</p> <p><i>Student involvement will ensure a level of sensitivity to their needs and enhance the likelihood that activities are supported by teachers and families.</i></p>	<p>To what extent does the school culture/ethos promote student participation and what might be the implications for engaging families in school activities?</p> <p>What programmes and activities do we currently provide for youth participation in and beyond the school?</p> <p>What other activities might we provide that could help engage families and students and that would contribute to connectedness between students, their family and the school community?</p>	

Tool 4: Success factors and strategies for strengthening family–school partnerships as part of a whole school approach to drug prevention, cont.

Success factors	Suggested strategies	 Some questions for consideration	Our responses
11. Active family and community networks	<p>Nurture an active family and community network that involves a critical mass of parents and community members</p> <p><i>A critical mass of parents might be five to ten per cent of your parent population. Parent and community involvement might fluctuate, but maintaining a critical mass that represents the diversity of the local community and students' needs will help sustain partnerships that are relevant to promoting health and wellbeing.</i></p>	<p>How effective are our current networks and how do we know this?</p> <p>Do we have a critical mass of parents/families that are part of the school community?</p> <p>Does this group of parents/families represent the diversity of the local community and the needs of all our students?</p> <p>If we wish to engage a broader range of families in our school, who might they be and what steps might we take?</p> <p>Do we have productive relationships with community representatives and appropriate networks with agencies and services to meet the needs of all our students?</p>	
12. Evaluation of family–school partnership goals and activities	<p>Evaluate partnership strategy and activities aimed at a whole school approach to drug prevention and intervention</p> <p><i>Evaluation of the school's drug education strategy as a whole, and the family–school partnership goals and activities within it, is essential to good practice.</i></p>	<p>Do we have evaluation methods for our school drug education strategy?</p> <p>If so, how might these mesh with our family–school partnership plan and activities for drug prevention and intervention?</p> <p>What evaluation methods should we use for specific programmes and activities, and who will conduct these evaluations?</p> <p>How will the evaluation outcomes be reported and to whom?</p>	

Tool 5: Stakeholders can ...

Following are some possible roles that key stakeholder groups can undertake to strengthen and sustain family–school partnerships as part of a holistic and comprehensive approach to drug prevention and resilience building within the school community. Although roles and activities need to be determined at the local school level, the following tables provide an overview of what key stakeholders can do to help promote strong school–family partnerships for nurturing resilience and reducing drug-related harm.

Tool 5: Stakeholders can ... , cont.

Principals and school executive

The school principal and school executive (the school leadership team) are crucial to the success of any initiative. A supportive executive will generate confidence among staff and the broader community that family-school partnerships have value and benefits for students and the community. They are also in a position to provide ongoing assistance such as professional development and resources, and their authority will help steer and implement any changes across the school.

The principal and school executive can:

- lead and advocate family involvement
- promote processes for learning about family dynamics and non-traditional family structures, and understanding of diverse cultures within the school community
- recruit parents and community members for school tasks related to drug education and health prevention, as well as broader school participation and volunteering
- promote shared decision-making from policy through to curriculum, including those aspects clearly related to health and wellbeing
- seek and provide funding for materials, space, and equipment used in promoting family and community involvement
- provide teachers with professional development in family and community involvement
- improve two-way communication between school and home
- identify and reduce barriers to family involvement
- encourage initiatives to help the school expand its ability to work with families
- undertake an audit of the effectiveness of current family-school partnerships in nurturing resilience and reducing drug-related harm within the school community
- involve the school in action research to study school-family-community relationships, discuss efforts to involve families and the community, and devise strategies to improve their own practice
- promote and/or participate on a partnership or Family-School Action Team that is committed to developing a comprehensive approach to nurturing resilience, wellbeing and drug prevention within the school community.

Tool 5: Stakeholders can ... , cont.

Family–School Action Team

A Family–School Action Team or partnership team can facilitate the collaboration of families and schools in the preparation, planning, implementation and review of family–school partnership activities. Members of the team bring their own perspectives, experiences and skills to the project of family engagement for a range of strategies aimed at drug prevention and fostering resilience within the school community.

Family–School Action Teams can:

- lead and advocate parent involvement
- promote processes for learning about family dynamics within the school community
- find out about existing arrangements and practices in areas of family–school collaboration, fostering resilience in students and families, drug prevention and intervention within the school community
- collect information on the views, experiences and wishes of all stakeholders (such as parents, teachers, school executive, students and the broader community) on partnership plans and activities that will support drug prevention and foster resilience in students and the school community
- endorse and inform the school community of proposed partnership plans and activities
- develop implementation strategies, goals, time lines and success indicators for partnership plans and activities that will foster resilience and wellbeing in students and the broader school community
- organise professional development and training for key stakeholders in areas such as family–school partnerships, drug education community forums/events, and nurturing resilience at school and in the family
- implement selected and agreed partnership activities
- evaluate the partnership initiatives
- develop improvements for sustained and ongoing partnership practices
- explore opportunities for new partnerships that will enhance the wellbeing of all students and the school community.

Tool 5: Stakeholders can ... , cont.

Teachers

Teachers are in a strong position to help facilitate the collaboration of families with the school in drug education programmes and learning activities. Teachers and parents are the adults in a young person's life who are likely to know, care and be in a position to nurture the health and wellbeing of that young person. Teachers and families can work collaboratively to connect learning at home and school, and provide opportunities for meaningful participation, positive and supportive relationships and high but achievable expectations.

Teachers can:

- work with families to determine mutually agreed roles and strategies for how they can work together to support students' learning and wellbeing
- acknowledge the positive strengths that all parents have to contribute to their child's learning
- recognise students' family environments and draw on the strengths of family and community in the curriculum learning activities
- develop appropriate communication strategies that inform parents of curriculum topics and how they might support learning and key health messages at home
- encourage parent involvement in their child's learning and provide advice to support that involvement
- provide flexible opportunities for family members to work with students on learning activities in the classroom
- provide flexible opportunities for family members to participate in activities beyond the classroom and in community settings
- provide opportunities for students to become key participants in communicating within their families about their learning, eg learning journeys
- provide parent information sessions detailing information about the programmes or subjects their child is undertaking
- provide clear and timely information to parents about the achievements and progress of their child, and opportunities for two-way dialogue about progress
- provide regular and flexibly scheduled conferences involving students and families, to discuss student progress and answer parent queries/concerns
- disseminate a regular schedule of useful notices, memos, phone calls and other communications regarding school programmes and student progress
- provide student-centred learning activities that will engage students in presenting at a parent/family event.

Tool 5: Stakeholders can ... , cont.

Welfare/pastoral staff

Welfare/pastoral care staff are in a strong position to help facilitate the involvement of families with those students who may need additional help or referral. For those students who require some additional help due to problems with learning and/or behaviour, welfare/pastoral staff can work with family members to determine early intervention strategies at home and school. For those students at risk who require support and/or treatment from external agencies, welfare/pastoral staff can work with family members to determine appropriate options and supports.

Welfare/pastoral staff can:

- ensure parents/caregivers are kept informed when their child is absent
- discuss with parents/caregivers when their child is having difficulties (academic and/or behavioural)
- use communication protocols for talking with the school and class teachers when a student needs additional help
- provide professional support and collaborate with the teacher, other colleagues and the family to assist the student who is in need of additional help
- develop and support appropriate protocols and communication strategies for informing and involving parents and caregivers where their child requires additional help
- provide information for students and families on community health; cultural, recreational and social support; and other programmes or services
- provide students and families with culturally appropriate information and services for counselling and referral within the community
- ensure clear procedures for informing and involving parents/families in treatment options for children at risk
- engage parents/caregivers (where appropriate) in the decisions and strategies for addressing their child's treatment needs
- establish and maintain effective networks with community agencies and resources that can help support students at risk and their families, where required.

Tool 5: Stakeholders can ... , cont.

Parents

Parents are the first educators of their children. They have a major influence on their resilience, learning and wellbeing. Parents and families can have a range of strengths and possible challenges in supporting their children to learn and develop. Where and when possible, engaging in activities with their own child and having strong connections to school and the community can help support the child's learning and wellbeing. (See the REDI – for Parents Parent Pack for advice on what parents can do to help protect their children from drug-related harm.)

Parents/family members can:

- support learning activities in the home
- provide opportunities for family learning in a range of activities that are meaningful to their child
- provide a supportive context for discussing concerns and issues
- advocate for their child when they have concerns
- provide opportunities for meaningful participation and achievement in the home and support activities as best as possible within the school setting
- engage in parent education/events in the school community
- inform teachers when their child is having difficulties (academic and/or behavioural)
- use communication protocols for talking with the school and class teachers
- seek help when they have concerns that their child may not be thriving academically and/or socially or emotionally
- access information for their child or themselves on community health; cultural, recreational and social support; and other programmes or services
- use culturally appropriate information and services for counselling and referral within the community, in partnership with the school.

Tool 5: Stakeholders can ... , cont.

Community agencies and services

Community agencies and services can provide a vital support to members of the school community, including school staff, parents and students. A partnership approach between the school and outside agencies provides the opportunity for students and their families to access appropriate support and services, including treatment if required. Strong links between the school and community agencies and services can support a holistic approach to understanding and addressing the needs of young people within the communities within which they live and may require support.

Community agencies and services can:

- provide appropriate assessment and treatment services to those students in need of specific interventions beyond the school
- promote community-based activities within the school to help engage students with their community
- work with teachers, students and family members on community-based events
- work with a student and his/her family when there is a crisis
- work with school welfare and pastoral care staff within the school to provide welfare support to those students and families in need of additional help
- provide professional support/guidance to school staff on ways to work with an individual or a group of students
- work in collaboration with school personnel to provide a coordinated service plan that supports a student who is in need of ongoing treatment and support
- organise student support groups involving students, family members and welfare/pastoral care staff
- promote an interagency approach across community agencies and the school to ensure a continuum of care and consistent approach for students in need of external services
- advocate and support a young person where family or parent involvement is inappropriate or not possible
- provide information to students and families on community health; cultural, recreational and social support; and other available programmes or services
- participate in parent events where their professional expertise can support school staff and the broader community.

Tool 6: REDI – for Parents audit tool

REDI – for Parents audit

This audit tool has been designed to assist your school community to find out what is happening ‘at the moment’ in terms of family–school partnerships, and to meet the needs of all students, across the spectrum from drug prevention to intervention. It can be used with different groups (such as parents, secondary students, staff and community members) to better understand the current approach to drug prevention and family–school partnerships.

It will allow you to:

- capture a profile of what is happening currently in terms of family–school partnerships as part of the school’s approach to drug prevention
- identify where particular groups may have differing views of how well family–school partnerships are currently functioning
- identify particular strengths and weaknesses across the four areas for promoting health and wellbeing through family–school partnerships
- create a basis for discussion about what your school community would like to focus on in the future to enhance family–school partnerships as part of the school’s approach to drug prevention.

When using this tool it is useful to remember the following:

- This is just one approach for seeking the views and opinions of key stakeholders in the school community on partnership approaches to drug prevention.
- The audit is a tool to assist in identification of issues; it is not a test.
- The partnership team or Family–School Action Team may take responsibility for overseeing the use of the tool as part of the step to ‘identify priorities’.
- The tool can be adapted and some of the questions changed, to better meet your context.
- The audit tool questions can be piloted with some key stakeholders first, and then adapted to your particular context and needs.
- You should determine the exact purpose of using this tool and how it might fit in with other information gathering you may be conducting.
- You need to decide how the results will be collated, by whom, and what will then happen to inform future actions for strengthening your family–school partnerships.
- The results of the audit can be used to help in the strategic planning process (see Tool 7). It allows stakeholders to work collaboratively to identify the priorities and strategies for strengthening your family–school partnerships for drug prevention.
- The results of the audit will provide a snapshot of the current situation as seen by stakeholders. You can reuse the tool at a later date to evaluate any changes your school has made to its family–school partnerships.

Tool 6: REDI – for Parents audit tool

Working with responses from different stakeholders

The audit addresses and can be completed by:

- **the school leadership team**
- **school staff**
- **parents**
- **secondary students**
- **community members.**

It will allow you to identify where particular groups may have differing views on how well family–school partnerships are currently functioning (eg school staff and parents may have different views of how well the school communicates with parents).

It is important to look critically at the audit results of the different respondent groups. For example, if the school staff respond positively in an area to which parents respond poorly, it may be an indication of poor communication or ineffective activity design, such as inappropriate timing of an event or cultural or linguistic concerns.

Note that the statements in the audit are not suitable for students below secondary schooling.

Tool 6: REDI – for Parents audit tool, cont.

Audit tool

Section 1: Whole school environment

Completed by (circle the appropriate box):

School executive	Teacher (subject area)	Parent	Student	Other (please identify area)
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Is the whole school environment inclusive and supportive, so all students, staff, families and community can engage and contribute to the life and activities of the school community, including those aimed at drug prevention?

ISSUE	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
1. There is a positive school climate where all of our students and families feel welcome.					
2. Our school has clear guidelines on who does what in the school, so I know who to talk to and feel able to do so if and when I need to.					
3. There's opportunity for all families and community members to be involved in a variety of ways in the life of the school.					
4. Our school finds out about and is interested in the needs and priorities of all students and their families as part of promoting learning, health and wellbeing.					
5. We provide opportunities for a diverse range of parents and community members to be involved in school decision-making, including that related to student wellbeing and drug prevention.					
6. I am kept informed about student welfare and drug education policies.					

Tool 6: REDI – for Parents audit tool, cont.

ISSUE	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
7. The school communicates information, including that related to student welfare and drug education, clearly and appropriately.					
8. I am involved in school drug education initiatives.					
9. Staff can undertake professional development in working with parents as part of promoting positive student outcomes.					
10. Parents have opportunities to participate in learning events that can support their role in helping protect their child/ren from drug-related harm.					
11. The school encourages my participation in a wide range of interesting activities across the school community.					

Tool 6: REDI – for Parents audit tool, cont.

Section 2: School curriculum

Completed by (circle the appropriate box):

School executive	Teacher (subject area)	Parent	Student	Other (please identify area)
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Does the school curriculum provide rich and meaningful learning opportunities for all students as part of its approach to drug prevention; and does it promote positive interactions between students, staff, parents and the broader community?

ISSUE	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
1. Teachers and family work together to support students' learning and wellbeing.					
2. The school curriculum recognises our different family environments and draws on those strengths in students' learning activities.					
3. The drug education programme is targeted to meet the needs and priorities of all students.					
4. Families are consulted and involved in decisions regarding students' learning and progress, including the health curriculum and drug education.					
5. Students engage in meaningful home tasks that support positive learning experiences within the family.					
6. Learning activities promote life skills such as problem solving, help seeking and decision-making.					

Tool 6: REDI – for Parents audit tool, cont.

ISSUE	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
7. There are opportunities for families and community members to participate in classroom activities.					
8. Our school welcomes feedback from home on classroom programmes and activities, including those targeting drug prevention, health and wellbeing.					
9. Parent and teacher interviews encourage positive exchange of information between family and school on students' learning and wellbeing.					
10. Classroom activities support students' positive sense of identity and culture and are linked to community resources.					

Tool 6: REDI – for Parents audit tool, cont.

Section 3: Pastoral and welfare support

Completed by (circle the appropriate box):

School executive	Teacher (subject area)	Parent	Student	Other (please identify area)
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Do families and the school seek to work in partnership to support students in need of additional help, and to keep each other informed as students face particular challenges?

ISSUE	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
1. There is regular exchange of information between families and school staff about the welfare of students.					
2. There are clear guidelines on who to contact within the school if a student is having difficulties.					
3. Our school has an effective system for identifying and responding to potential times of risk for students, such as transition.					
4. There is a collaborative approach to decisions between families and school staff for supporting students' additional learning and/or welfare needs.					
5. I am involved in helping review the programmes designed to address students' welfare and pastoral care needs.					
6. Our school considers the specific language and cultural needs of students and their families when communicating about welfare/pastoral support needs.					
7. I can access up-to-date and relevant information on community organisations/ events/resources that aim to support students in need of help and their families.					

Tool 6: REDI – for Parents audit tool, cont.

Section 4: School and community-based resources

Completed by (circle the appropriate box):

School executive	Teacher (subject area)	Parent	Student	Other (please identify area)
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Do strong partnerships with community agencies and resources exist so that students and families in crisis can access appropriate support and services?

ISSUE	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
1. Our school has an up-to-date register of community agencies and support services that meet the needs of our students and families.					
2. Strong links are maintained between the school and appropriate counselling services and community agencies.					
3. A positive and non-judgmental approach is taken with students at risk, while still setting clear rules and responsibilities for reducing harm to self and others.					
4. We have school policies and guidelines for communicating information about students at risk of drug-related harm.					
5. Consideration is given to the specific language, cultural and financial needs of students and their families in accessing appropriate assessment and treatment services.					
6. The priorities of the student, family and school are considered when accessing community support and treatment services.					
7. There is a collaborative approach between school welfare and outside agencies in assessing and treating students who are in need of support and treatment services.					
8. Where possible, parents and family members are involved in and reinforce a student's support needs.					
9. Time is set aside to monitor and review the outcomes for students at high risk who are being supported.					

Tool 7: Strategic action plan

The whole school environment

Objectives What do we want to achieve in this area between families and the school for fostering resilience and reducing drug-related harm?	Current situation What's happening now?	Research What do we need to know more about?	Strategies What do we need to do to achieve our objectives?	Support What resources are required?	Monitoring What indicators of success will we look for?

Tool 7: Strategic action plan, cont.

The curriculum

Objectives What do we want to achieve in this area between families and the school for fostering resilience and reducing drug-related harm?	Current situation What's happening now?	Research What do we need to know more about?	Strategies What do we need to do to achieve our objectives?	Support What resources are required?	Monitoring What indicators of success will we look for?

Tool 7: Strategic action plan, cont.

Additional support and early intervention within the school

Objectives What do we want to achieve in this area between families and the school for fostering resilience and reducing drug-related harm?	Current situation What's happening now?	Research What do we need to know more about?	Strategies What do we need to do to achieve our objectives?	Support What resources are required?	Monitoring What indicators of success will we look for?

Tool 7: Strategic action plan, cont.

Intervention and services for those 'at risk'

Objectives What do we want to achieve in this area between families and the school for fostering resilience and reducing drug-related harm?	Current situation What's happening now?	Research What do we need to know more about?	Strategies What do we need to do to achieve our objectives?	Support What resources are required?	Monitoring What indicators of success will we look for?

Tool 8: Sample activities for strengthening and sustaining family–school partnerships

Following is a list of some activities school communities might implement to strengthen and sustain partnerships across the whole school to prevent and reduce drug-related harm. They provide sample activities only. Each school community will need to determine its own priorities and the most appropriate strategies to meet their particular context.

Sample family–school partnerships activities across the whole school environment

1. Promote a culture of welcoming across the school staff and students.
2. Develop a register of families' strengths, interests and expertise that they might like to contribute to the school.
3. Maintain a staff directory identifying the roles and responsibilities of staff, particularly in relation to drug or student welfare issues and include this information in any school open day or orientation activities.
4. Develop a parent engagement policy within the school that outlines roles, responsibilities and methods for partnership in decision-making.
5. Establish a parent network so that parents call others on the school's behalf to invite them to events/activities.
6. Allocate a parent space within the school.
7. Open up the school as a community resource so families feel comfortable entering the school and develop a sense of being part of a school community, eg run computer or sewing classes within the school or enable the school to be used for Saturday school and recreation or homework classes for children and parents.
8. Provide joint professional development for staff and parents on relevant issues, eg training for classroom support and ways to maximise parent involvement.
9. Provide learning events within the school that promote student participation so parents and family members will come along and see their child's contribution.
10. Provide transport, child minding, etc at school-based events and activities.
11. Provide joint information sessions for parents and students on issues such as homework policy, study skills, career decision-making, etc.
12. Organise parenting skills workshops/discussions/meetings around priority areas that will contribute to parents' understanding of and skills to support their children's ongoing development and wellbeing.
13. Celebrate cultural days and involve all families and local communities.
14. Provide interpreters at family meetings and information evenings.

Tool 8: Sample activities for strengthening and sustaining family–school partnerships, cont.

15. Devote staff meeting time to exploring ways of improving communication with families that will enhance the learning and wellbeing of all students.
16. Throughout the year and through a variety of methods, publicise opportunities for parent and community involvement.
17. Provide genuine opportunities and invitations for all parents and families across the community to be involved in advisory committees, school councils, Family–School Action Teams, parent bodies and organisations.
18. Review the school’s drug education policy and ensure it meets the diverse needs of all families and students across the community.
19. Regularly include information for parents in the school newsletter/website about strategies to promote student resilience, health and wellbeing.
20. Develop booklets/information leaflets for parents on issues such as stages of child development, nurturing resilience, homework policy, smoking policy, programmes the school offers, how to support their child’s learning, etc.

Tool 8: Sample activities for strengthening and sustaining family–school partnerships, cont.

Sample family–school partnerships activities across the school curriculum

1. Establish a homework policy that clarifies purpose and possible roles for parent involvement.
2. Undertake an inventory of families' strengths, interests and expertise that they might like to contribute to student learning activities.
3. Provide professional development to teaching staff who may need cross-cultural skills for working with students and their families.
4. Provide family information sheets on a term/semester basis that set out the learning their child will be involved in, highlighting any aspects of the learning that may involve families.
5. Integrate activities within the school curriculum that acknowledge and celebrate the diversity of students' backgrounds and cultural assets.
6. Provide an integrated curriculum across key learning areas that promotes a resilience-based approach to health and wellbeing, including skills such as communicating with others, problem solving and decision-making.
7. Ask community leaders and agency personnel to review the drug education curriculum for its cultural appropriateness.
8. Organise a parent event where students, families and community members work collaboratively to plan and present activities with a drug prevention focus.
9. Provide programmes where students engage with the community and its resources.
10. Invite parents on excursions.
11. Provide school excursions where students and families can participate in learning activities together.
12. Invite parents, family and community members to participate in planned learning activities as part of the school's curriculum.
13. Provide information and guidelines to parents on how they might model and communicate positive attitudes about learning and wellbeing that are appropriate to their child's stage of development.
14. Set homework that engages family members in discussion. (However, also ensure that these assignments are not always the emphasis of home tasks as some students may not have the opportunity to engage with their family members in this manner on an on-going basis.)
15. Arrange regular informal 'meetings' with parents to share their thoughts and possible concerns.

Tool 8: Sample activities for strengthening and sustaining family–school partnerships, cont.

Sample family–school partnerships activities where students may need additional help

1. Review with key stakeholders across the school community the school welfare policy to ensure it meets the needs of all students and families.
2. Provide parents and students with clear and culturally appropriate information on the school welfare policy and who to contact if they have any concerns.
3. Communicate to families the range of programmes and supports within the school that can assist if students are in need of additional help.
4. Provide parents with information booklets/leaflets on signs that might indicate a student is vulnerable to poor learning and health outcomes at different stages of their development.
5. Maintain a strong network among all staff and set time aside to consider those students who may be in need of additional help and support.
6. Maintain up-to-date and confidential records of those students who require assessment and referral.
7. Implement targeted programmes for children who need their learning and resilience to be strengthened.
8. Implement a ‘recovery’ programme or other early intervention programme.
9. Involve the school in programmes with a drug prevention focus such as Wakakirii, the Rock Eisteddfod, Police Youth programmes and community service programmes.
10. Offer a range of extra curricula programmes that will engage students with different interests, eg Duke of Edinburgh, Outward Bound, debating, mock trial, theatre sports. Match these activities and skills against the interests of your school community and look for expertise among the family groups, as this may be a means to create some valuable school–family partnerships.
11. Connect students with interest groups beyond school to expand their social connections and provide more opportunities for success, eg sporting, Scouts, and art and craft classes.
12. Investigate programmes and agencies within the community and collect information on community health, social support and other programmes or services that may be of interest to students and families.

Tool 8: Sample activities for strengthening and sustaining family–school partnerships, cont.

Sample family–school partnerships activities where students need assessment and referral

1. Review the school's drug policy and incident management plan to ensure it meets the needs of all students, including those at risk.
2. Communicate clear rules and responsibilities to staff, students and parents around drug use in the school.
3. Maintain an up-to-date register of community agencies and services that can meet the diverse and specific needs of students at risk, and their families.
4. Communicate referral information to parents and students in an accessible and non-threatening way.
5. Establish clear guidelines within the school for seeking to retain students at risk in schooling, while ensuring others are not put at risk.
6. Provide opportunities for counselling services and community agencies to be involved in school-based activities as appropriate.
7. Establish support groups for students at risk that involve students, parents, welfare staff and community agency personnel.
8. Establish methods for monitoring and reviewing the outcomes of high risk students who are being supported.

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